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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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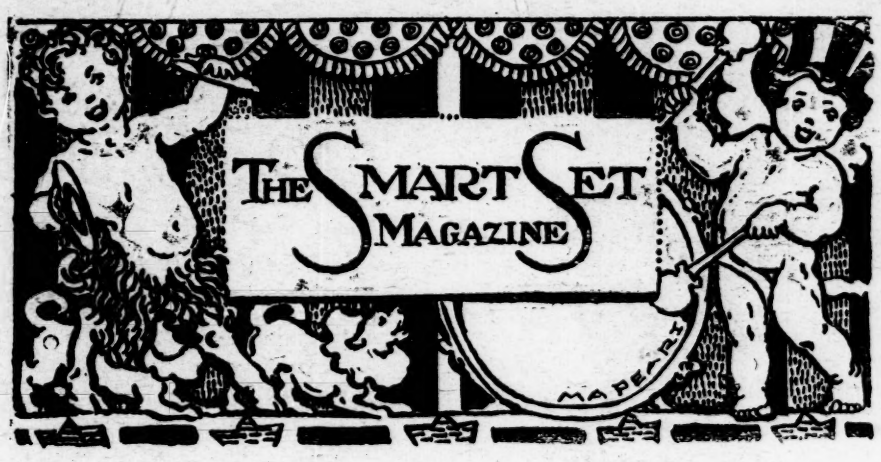

THE LOVE FEVER

By G. Vere Tyler

CHAPTER I

STANLEY WINSTON'S appearance belied, to a certain extent, his wisdom. He had not worn off the marks of his college days, and the youthful supercilious look that distinguished him and made him, in a way, feared by professors and sophomores alike, had not left him. It had, nevertheless, been judiciously toned down so as to stand him in good stead for playing the part he had chosen in life.

While financially dependent, at least in part, on his own exertions, he looked and felt superior to whatever condition faced him. On the other hand he also recognized the subtlety of any opposing condition, and studied both men and situations to be in reality superior. It was this astute observation, indulged in for an entirely different purpose, that had brought forth his latent gift as a writer. In the success of a novel, carelessly written while spending two years in the wilds of Arizona, with the idea of banishing a predisposition to frailty, he found himself, and without hesitation, abiding by his discovery.

Possessed of a natural sagacity, he recognized that his training had merely contributed to what nature had indulged him with, and that he had in reality been following the dictates of his subconscious self. As far as his actual character was concerned, he remained natural, ingenuous, and a bit imperative. He saw through people at a glance, and his glance concealed or betrayed at will what he saw. His own emotions he disdained as impediments to his intention towards superiority and power.

Physically he was at a great advantage, as, if, in fact, the gods had created him for the purpose of pleasing the eye. Women were especially feasted by gazing at him, or staring after him. On account of his slim and accurately proportioned form, he looked taller than he really was, and it was this delicacy rather than any manly robustness that charmed. It affected a deceptive appeal to the senses, and indirectly to sympathy. He had slender feet and magnetic hands, with muscles of steel, that seemed first to caress and then analyze whatever he touched. His com-

plexion, rather rich in tone, his bright chestnut hair and eyes of a mingled brown and grey, seemed apparently to have been washed in gold.

He seemed, in fact, always to be standing in a gold-washed light. Under excitement there burnt in his cheeks a bar of crimson, hectic in effect, but which served to emphasize the refinement of his countenance. His walk was a boyish stride. When he sat it was as one comfortably relaxed from mental and physical effort for the purpose of indulging in a graceful pose. His eyes, sometimes yellow, sometimes grey, according to the light from without or within, were possessed of a highly intelligent, alert expression, or glance, such as one may see in a thoroughbred horse. Through them one might discover a temperament capable of cruelty through conviction. His upper lip was short; his mouth an irritating challenge. It housed beautiful teeth, and below it was a chin that narrowed into spirituality. He bore a strong likeness, mentally and physically, to his mother, a frail woman who wrote unpublished poems, and died at the age of thirty-eight.

The rest of the family consisted of his father and a delicate sister whose life was spent combating consumptive tendencies. It was this father, and the frail sister, who never tired of attempting to convince him that his good looks and unusual gifts fully entitled him to wealth which could easily be acquired by a suitable marriage.

The idea of using an unloved woman to better his condition in life did not appeal to him, but his power of analysis enabled him to come to the conclusion that he might, if he chose to exert himself, give value received. He finally ended by yielding to the views of his family, especially his father, for whom he entertained an extravagant admiration, and who had always, for some subtle reason, perhaps a wholly intellectual one, exerted a very strong influence over him.

With a mind that contained the glittering callous streak of the artistic temperament it was a relief when he finally succumbed to the advantageous idea. Naturally, he argued, he would marry sooner or later—wise men as well as fools generally did—and since he was not given to sentimental effusion, why not a rich girl as well as a poor one? A flower brought up under the most favourable conditions in the best appointed hothouse, must in the nature of things be, even if a little artificial, more satisfactory than one that had struggled along any way out-of-doors and finally bloomed. And besides, wild roses always grew in the highways and hedges for anyone inclined to enjoy wild roses.

His secret hope was that this sane marriage would inoculate him against love, which passion he considered solely in the light of a disease. As men protected themselves against smallpox by vaccination, he hoped this marriage would vaccinate him—keep him immune to love. He dreaded the idea of being in love as other men dread smallpox. It would leave no scars, but while the fever raged it would rage furiously, perhaps disastrously. He knew that, and up to the present time had rather avoided women who suggested to him the possibility of an attack. He wished to regard them as he did everything else: coldly, critically. His book had handled women this way. His hero had resisted them.

He had, in fact, a perfect horror of falling in love. A man in love was in his eyes no more than a being in the agonies of a malady he had caught from some woman. Women were choke full of love, and this love, in his opinion, was a deadly poison. Men were free from it. It was not a part of their nature or make up. They caught it from women. It was a contagious disease that all women had, and could unfortunately transmit. Men did catch it, but he could recall only a few who couldn't, didn't, recover from it. Women never recovered from it. It was a part of them from the cradle to the grave. They went about trying to give it to men. When they suc-

ceeded, for the time being they could use the afflicted one to advantage.

Fearing their power, their power to pass over to him this contagious disease, he rather hated women. It was perfectly easy for a man to satisfy all the cravings of his nature without being in love. Over and over he repeated to himself that love was a disease that put one in a strange fever that produced delirium. He believed that this state was more conducive of pain than pleasure, but had long since made up his mind if he ever was attacked he would let the disease run its course: he would not attempt to combat it. Completely and entirely given over to it, the disease invariably ran its course to a successful finish. A man was bound to come out cured. If his return to health crippled the woman, as he felt love let go at full speed might, it was not man's affair. A superior power to his created the world and its ways, and it was not for him to question God's wisdom but to nurture his own.

CHAPTER II

THIS self-poised, somewhat egotistical, but after all very charming young man, was seated one chilly May afternoon in the drawing-room of the young girl he had asked to be his wife. She lived, as he did, in Washington, the city he considered the most beautiful in the world.

The environment was luxurious and in her presence Winston felt, at any rate, not uncomfortable. She was pretty, sufficiently intelligent, girlish, vivacious, and very rich. He looked on at the situation that could easily, he felt, be transcribed to a chapter, and breathed in the perfume of some purple hyacinths that were perishing in a silver bowl.

The young girl was an only child. Her father, a rich coal magnate, was a clear-sighted practical man who had been a widower for fifteen years. He settled down in Washington because it gave him the opportunity to dabble in political and diplomatic affairs, and he could keep in touch with senators and the nation's representatives.

It was as though not only the girl, but all the conditions surrounding her, had been planned and created to meet the requirements of Stanley Winston. His father, the elderly Stanley, had even one evening, while the two were dining, said this to the son, and had added, how fortunate it was that young Stanley had never been taken off his feet by one not so planned and created. And young Stanley had answered that his wholly selfish, cold, and calculating experiences with women had, he believed, rendered him incapable of being taken off his feet, and added that he certainly regarded his future wife as a valuable safety valve.

His father, as clever as young Stanley, changed the subject by saying, with a complimentary smile, that he felt sure his son could make amends to Nelly Ellsworth for having allowed herself to be so delightfully developed for his benefit.

To this young Stanley replied that what his father had said was quite true, as she might have fallen down and sustained some physical injury that would have destroyed the fitness of things.

The conversation recurred to him as his eyes lingered, and lingered critically, upon Nelly. He wasn't in love; that delightful assurance was his. But he was sufficiently decent by nature to feel grateful to her for all that she was, not forgetting her pleasing young self, about to bestow upon him. He decided that it lay in his power to make Nelly happy, quite happy, in fact, and it interested him to think, that in this way, by making Nelly happy he would, at any rate to a great extent, free himself from obligation.

She was in love with him, of course. From the moment he had played to centre her interest the fact was an established one. That, he assured himself, would make his task, his very laudable task, all the easier. He had no intention to ever worry her in the

ways a man can worry a girl hopelessly in love with him. Nor would he complicate things by making her jealous.

"So," he remarked, when the servant had noiselessly disappeared with Nelly's elaborate tea service, "you do not regret your father's intention to marry again?"

"Oh! no," and Nelly was very girlish indeed. "I believe I am rather pleased."

She then added:

"You know, she, Mrs. Branscombe, is visiting us at present!"

"Really!"

"She has been a widow," Nelly burst forth, "since she was twenty!"

"And how old is she now?" inquired Stanley with a rising inflection of voice.

"Twenty-eight." And Nelly's hands were clapped. "She is so wondrously beautiful! You have never seen anyone like her, I know! Papa says *he* never has! I am sure you will put her in a book!"

"A type, is she?"

"I don't know about that," mused Nelly. "I don't know what she is, except beautiful and wonderful!"

"But I am not partial to beautiful and wonderful heroines," Stanley protested. "I like them out of the ordinary—queer, a bit eccentric!"

"Oh!" and Nelly laughed, "she's eccentric enough! Papa says that!"

"You aren't eccentric, are you?" he inquired. "Just a perfectly normal, very sweet little girl, aren't you?"

"I hope so!"

And as he had intended a blush stole, rather rushed, to her cheeks.

He took one of her hands up as though to kiss it, but, having examined it, put it back with a very gentle gesture in her lap, inwardly remarking, as her eyes became moist in sudden love, it would be very simple to keep her pleased—such little things as that. A compliment, a light touch, and she would be quite happy.

"Why do you like to create eccentric heroines?" she inquired by way of regaining her composure, by way of being an up-to-date young lady able to converse.

"They give me trouble; they are a bit difficult to handle, and I like that."

"You'd like to write of *her* then; I'm sure you would! Papa says she's the most original person he ever met. *She* says it's only because she is Southern and he doesn't know Southern women—that they're all more or less like her."

"Oh! she is a Southerner, then?"

"Yes, she comes from Charlestown, South Carolina. She says that's the most Southern place in the world, even more than Virginia. She had an awfully heated argument with a Virginia lady the other day at a tea as to which was the more Southern—South Carolina or Virginia."

"Why not North Carolina?" smiled Stanley, and touched a little curl nestling above her ear. . . . He really liked to see her colour come and go, to be able to effect this.

"Oh!" and Nelly looked very grave, "they say, and papa does, too, that Virginians and South Carolina people don't consider *North* Carolina at all!"

"Oh! is that so? Poor North Carolina!"

"*She* simply scorns it, and her husband was killed, she says, in that State, too!"

"Killed?" inquired Stanley, thinking that he must buy a little ring for Nelly to please her. . . He went through the whole ceremony of presenting her with a little ring.

"Yes, she says her entire life has been a tragedy, but papa says from what *he* can gather her entire life has been a romance!"

"Well, that," Stanley exclaimed artificially, and wondering if he might not soon leave, "*is* interesting!"

"She was married when she was eighteen, and at twenty she was a widow. Her husband was killed in a railroad accident in North Carolina where he owned some timber land. She gets her income—she says," and Nelly laughed, "it isn't very much of an income—from that! But she's been true

to the memory of her husband all these years. She says hundreds of men have tried to make love to her but that until she met papa she never even encouraged one by a look. If you had seen her the night we met her at Senator Slogan's ball I *know* you would have put her in *one* of your books anyway! She was all in white and—"

"I'm going to put *you* in *all* of my books," interrupted Stanley. "In every book will figure Mrs. Stanley Winston!"

"But not under that name!" exclaimed Nelly, greatly alarmed.

"Well, no," said Stanley as though deliberating seriously, "I think I will have to use a different name. Let's see now; we must have a beautiful name, mustn't we! How would this do? Mrs. Elverton Edgemere going through every book! Would you like that?"

"*Would* I?" And Nelly again clapped her hands. "You can put the whole family in," she added. "Papa—he's an awfully strong looking man, don't you think so? And as to Mrs. Branscombe! If you only told about her voice it would fill a chapter! She has the sweetest voice you ever heard! Papa says so, too! We are both, he and I, going to do everything in our power to make her forget all her sorrows—to rob her voice of its sad note, although she says she had *that* when she was a little girl. She says she hasn't changed and never will—that she brings the South along with her and that we will just have to adapt ourselves to her ways. And, of course, we don't mind! Why should we?"

"Of course!" echoed Stanley. "And how does her ladyship bring the South along?" he inquired, marvelling at the disingenuousness of his little sweetheart. She had told him she wasn't nineteen yet. It did seem rather a shame to have her bartered at such a tender age for the sake of him, his projects, his life. She really was being bartered in order that he might write his novels. It's pretty rotten, he thought. But if he made her happy? It would be all right then, wouldn't it? Of course!

He wondered if he ought to kiss her. He must kiss Nelly some time. He decided to wait until he was leaving—that he could best perform that ceremony, function, or whatever it was, in the circumstances, better just inside the door.

Nelly meantime was rattling on. He had missed a few sentences, but caught up with:

"By fixing everything here just as she has it there, or as nearly as possible. For instance, she won't stay in a steam-heated room or one that is lighted by electricity. So the steam pipes are hidden from sight by a jewelled screen—papa found a beautiful one in an antique shop and bought it. A grate for an open fire has been put in order and she burns candles—fifty a night! She says they, the candles, have always been her one extravagance, that she *has* to see flames. Don't you think she is very interesting?"

"I think you are!" Stanley returned politely as he bent forward to lay his hand, a hand resembling highly polished metal, on her rather soft one.

It was at this moment that the lady who had been the subject of discussion, the lady who burned fifty candles a night, swept into the room.

CHAPTER III

AFTERWARDS, when Stanley recalled their meeting, he supposed Nelly must have said something, spoken their names, lightly introduced them. What he distinctly remembered was the vanishing smile, the quick pallor, the look of helpless alarm in the wonderful eyes that met his, and that when he took her hand, it seemed to him it escaped his grasp, and that flexible fingers clutched at his heart, filling him with acute pain that left him weak and speechless.

For a full moment, he recalled, they gazed at each other and then Nelly must have spoken. He supposed so.

When he, however, actually found himself, and the world he was an inhabitant of, he was several blocks from Nelly's home, standing on a street corner.

It had grown dark and yet not quite dark. It was the opaque twilight hour. A full moon, serene and dignified, was coming slowly forward, growing momently in brightness. It was as though from behind it a strong light was being gradually turned on. He gazed at the moon, changing thus, until from a pale grey chiffon appearance it became silver bright, a silver disc that shone radiantly.

His mind became suddenly a blank to recent occurrences, and he thought quite a while on this, of the strange lantern hung so high and still, illuminating all below so easily. He looked about him with a gaze half rapt, half surprised. The wondrous beauty of Washington, the city of marble and trees, had always exerted a strange influence upon him. This influence had ended in making him a captive to its cold, idle, passionless charm. He recalled this, that no matter where he had been—and he had travelled a good bit for his twenty-six years—he had lived in a dream of Washington. It had always seemed to him, this city that he could only think of as lovely, the fairest sight on earth created out of material substances, as entirely apart from the persons who inhabited it. Often it appeared to him on quiet nights, especially on quiet moonlight nights, an uninhabited or deserted city, and his imagination would conjure up extravagant visions of fairies and angels intermingling with one another in marvellous spectacular exhibitions. He had even heard music to which they danced, especially when the veranda of the capitol was his viewplace. Up those broad steps, flooded in moonlight, his pageant had come, and with bated breath he had looked on at wonders known only to him, seen only by him. He was imaginative as well as analytical and cold. He had his own secrets.

He started as his mind reverted to the woman he had just met. In one instant she had become the embodiment of all his secrets, all his passionate love of beauty, all his dreams! Washington and all it represented to his mind was only the setting that his subconsciousness had planned for his love. She was the magician who had arrived in the form of a woman to push aside all the rest, and quietly and without any effort whatsoever take possession of him.

Always he had fancied he would resent the intruder, the disturber of his dream life, the woman from whom he would catch, imbibe the poison that would give him the love fever. He had expected to hate her, that he would be able to denounce her, even strike! And it was all different from what he had expected. He wanted to kneel before her, shed tears in her presence, kiss her hands, touch, as one touches the petals of a flower, the garment she wore. He had not dreamed that the fever would come like this, be like this. She had poisoned him, ah! yes, but the poison was sweet poison, not bitter, not painful.

He shivered as from a chill at the memory of her. She had swept into the room like a warm Southern breeze full of the perfumes of Araby. Flowers, spices, strange extracts, attar of rose, had seemed to envelop her. Just as he had heard the music to which his fairies, his angels, danced, before she reached him he had breathed deep of all perfumes, those perfumes of the imagination that penetrate the soul.

He was amazed by love, surprised by its sweetness, its fragrance, the overwhelming tenderness of it. He was overcome, he thought, because he had never felt tenderness before. And what was most strange of all, he wanted to possess her for her sake, not his!

A sense of protection filled him. No thought of self in this hour. Only thoughts for her, what possibilities lay within him for the sake of her.

And all this surprised him. He had expected the woman who robbed him of a calm consideration of women to fill him with resentment and the desire to ravage. And nothing of this sort had occurred. He was here, standing on a street corner, her helpless slave, quite ready to die for her.

He tried to recover himself, tried to think, and his effort ended in a smile, a smile of the drunken whose power and reason are gone. He was drunken! And as he pressed forward he was conscious of an uncertainty as to locality—uncertainty to a locality known to him so well. Suddenly he thought he saw her coming towards him in a bright light, the kind that he was in the habit of seeing spirit figures when about to go to sleep. He put out his hands to her and stumbled on until he had her in his arms with his lips pressed upon hers.

It was a real kiss that shocked him and in a way restored his senses. His mind cleared. He knew his way perfectly now, and walked very rapidly to his rooms.

CHAPTER IV

In the morning when he awoke for a few moments both himself and the situation seemed quite natural. He was in bed, his bed upon which he had expended so much thought, quite a luxurious bed it was, with familiar things, first of all familiar books, about him.

And yet, as he glanced around, with that peculiar glance of affection that the artist always bestows upon his possessions, no matter whether they be of the ornately grand or extremely simple order, it was more as one in a trance.

There seemed to be a lack of response in these material things of his that had invariably before greeted him with the actual, or he claimed this appeal of humans. His chairs, he told people, had characteristics quite in keeping with their forms. There was one particular one—and he thought it very beautiful—purchased at an antique shop, that received from him even more tender consideration than his acquaintances. It was a bit frayed, this big chair of scarlet satin, and he smiled at its decrepit appeal as one smiles at the fine frayed coat of some scholarly looking old man, a bit ancient, not at all up-to-date, important in the very fact of not being up-to-date, passing along the street. His book case; his Chinese lamp, under such a rare blue shade; his Turkish rug, blue predominating here too, purchased after such serious consideration, such, one might almost say, deep thought; his greyish velvet curtains, hanging in such graceful folds to the floor; the highly polished gold coloured floor itself, that bordered the cherished rug, and so many things including the Louis the Fifteenth oval mirror in its ornate gilt frame above the old-fashioned marble mantel, this highly valued mantel that had such beautiful roses of white marble carved into its foundation, all these things, choice and costly, costly for him, greeted him as they ever did, but with a difference. His dependency upon them had fled. The day before this room was life itself to him, every single thing in it living a life of its own in an harmonious effort to cater to him. It seemed to him now suddenly to have grown cold to him. The spirit of things had deserted. He was like a sea captain who has fallen asleep and merely dreams that his ship is still moving.

All of a sudden, while quite awake, fully conscious of the fact that he *was* awake, he seemed *to* awake with a start.

She was filling the room with herself in strange positions, in strange lights. There seemed to him to be quite a dozen of her, each distinct and each the embodiment of an idea. She was Titania in gauze in a golden light. Diana in blue in a silver light. Aurora in a roseate glow. Minerva in her helmet and armour in a copper-coloured glow. Venus clothed in seafoam in a fiery gleam.

It delighted him to succumb to the

magic influence, and he surrendered to it with a smile of the inebriate at that moment when realities slip into dreams, and physical activity nods, when the being seems to wave like a plume.

For quite a while, hands under his head, a placid smile upon his lips, he lay thus, his eyes following the flights of his imagination.

Suddenly, however, a look of alarm flashed to his eyes and he sat up in bed.

"I am in the throes," he said aloud, "of the delirium of love! The fever is on me! I have it!"

And again he was surprised that he felt no resentment.

He got up, took his seat in the old scarlet armchair, even in this moment with consideration for its dignity and age, and attempted to fling away his hallucinations. He tried to think. He did think, placing finally, after effort, the characters of his sudden drama in their relative positions.

Presently he heard the water being turned on for his bath. His servant had arrived. The day with himself in the throes of a malady that upset the plans of four persons, as well perhaps as the happiness of all, was about to begin. His theory that the only cure for love was to allow the disease full play to expend itself and die a natural death—as according to his deductions the love of man always did—presented itself to his consideration. He frankly admitted that before yielding to his helplessness he should, for the sake of all four, all four embarking on the sea of conventional matrimony, all four in the correct position to insure physical ease and peace of mind, attempt to throw off the disease and not become a disturber of sane, and, viewed from the world's standpoint, wholly delightful conditions.

He took his bath, not omitting the cold shower, and ate his breakfast quite composedly while contemplating his escape through plenty of fresh air taken in time. After breakfast he went out.

The day was perfect. Outside the city's limits spring seemed bent upon proclaiming summer. The sun was bright, the air soft, and birds, very love-busy birds, were twittering, some were even singing triumphant songs.

Always before, and especially as in the present case, when he was being carried along in an open taxi, it had proven sufficient. In such a strange sweet world he had been sufficient unto himself. Companionship, and more especially where women were concerned, yes, naturally of course, but fleeting companionship, companionship serving the mood of the hour.

He lay back, closed his eyes to take in all the sweetness of the day, take it in as he had so often done, in a kind of passionate dream, and the day, all the sweetness and charm he was experiencing, became her.

A little shudder, the first painful shudder of the disease, passed over him. He opened his eyes. And just as the cherished things of his room had failed to respond in the morning, nature now failed to satisfy. He felt irritable. He felt petulant. Away from nature he thought, back to humanity!

A little later he found himself in a crowded restaurant looking about him surprised. He had not remembered selecting the restaurant, or even arriving there. He must, he supposed, have been thinking rather deeply.

But of what? He couldn't recall. He could only remember a flight of discontented birds, a bevy of birds in dispute as they flew across the road ahead of him. What strange things birds were, and, for that matter, people, he among them, huddled in a place like this to feed. Fruit was the proper food, beautiful, highly-coloured fruit. And here he was selecting lobster Newburgh! He liked it though, always had, immensely. He wondered what her favourite dish was, might be. And as the waiter disappeared with his order, he put his elbow on the table and with his chin in his hands sat gazing at a

vision of her opposite him, feeling himself in a kind of stupor. He was trying to hold her eyes and look deep into them. But somehow they evaded him, shifted, became lost, and he felt irritable again, irritable and sad.

He wondered how it would be possible to eat the lobster with such a sensation of choking in his throat. He had no appetite, no desire or inclination of any kind. He wanted but one thing—to be where she was, where he could look upon her. Nothing else had any significance. That desire had significance. It was torture.

At night, listlessly as one in a dream, he climbed the steps of the, of *his* Capitol, and took in the moonlight scene, *his* moonlight scene of passionless marble, bathed in a cold light. He tried to evoke his pageant, his fairies and his angels. But ahead of him, in the centre of a desolate spot, he saw her, and only her. He put out his hands and this time the tears that sprang to his eyes rolled down his cheeks.

CHAPTER V

FOR a whole week he struggled against the inroads of the fever.

CHAPTER VI

A CERTAIN Saturday afternoon finished the week of his resistance.

It was a peculiarly beautiful afternoon, or so it seemed to him. A hush had come over Washington, the peculiar hush of great buildings, emptied of humanity and closed for a while.

As the sun lowered, the city, so silent and passive, seemed wrapped in a mantle of splendour that reflected a golden gleam.

In a mood to be affected by all beauty, Stanley believed the gift of such a resplendent afternoon had never been before. Just as in the earlier part of the day he had surrendered, as it were, given himself over to himself, he now surrendered to the afternoon. He gave himself over to it. He was going to her and he was patient. His surrender had left him serene. Impassioned surrender is delicious stupor. He felt that stupor. That his resistance, his brave fight against the disease that had so suddenly attacked him, had been in vain, he made no effort to deny. In fact any effort at such a denial only brought to his lips a languorous smile.

He was charged with this languor that came to his lips in dreary smiles. All his being was charged with it, and all his soul, in spite of his recognition, sharp at times, of consequences, responded rapturously.

The habit of allowing his emotions, now recognized as symptoms, to engage him went on, but his introspection ended in a kind of rambling revelry. If his eyes closed in thought he feared his ability to open them. If his mind—and nothing concerning her was vague—dwelt upon the memory of her eyes, the dress she wore, the turban hat that had covered her burnished head, or the violets pinned to her gown, tremors that he half feared passed over him.

And always he marvelled that there was no pain attached to this strange disease that had overtaken him, this new condition in which he found himself, to which he found himself bound. Only a feeble ecstasy against which his will beat as hopelessly as a caught bird against the bars of its cage. Sometimes, while seated in the old scarlet silk chair, which seemed to him a refuge, a comprehending friend, he, without any such intention, fell asleep. Sometimes while lying in bed he forced himself to keep awake that no sudden or new revelation of this mild intoxicating stupor might escape him.

While fully conscious of his condition, that it was the outcome of a passion imbibed from a woman, he no longer combated. He was content to be and let things be. He was as one asleep yet roving about dreaming wondrous dreams. He had only to will her presence, and she was beside him,

or in front of him, or she would be smiling down upon him if he looked up at the stars. Sometimes he would hold her hand; sometimes he would sit for quite a long while gazing into the depths of her splendid, beautifully tinted eyes, those eyes that in one instant told of a woman dumb to passion unless the soul be awakened.

His first glance had assured him that what Nelly had said, Nelly's description of her, was all too true. She was one who looked to flames to quench the inner flame. She was one who could be true to a dream or a duty. He believed instinctively she had been true to the memory of a man she had never loved.

There was charm in all this. Perhaps his week of resistance was self-indulgence, self-indulgence in rare and rapturous emotions. Perhaps it was preparation; perhaps he really struggled, struggled for the sake of Nelly, Nelly's father, even for *her* sake. He didn't know. The world and his own mind was in a jumble, a delirious jumble for which he could feel himself in no way responsible.

The strange beauty of the May afternoon, a May afternoon such as Washington alone can effect, a May afternoon more like June, broke down his resistance. All that he knew was that the world was fairer in his eyes than quiet waters at the sunset hour, and he himself as peaceful. He felt his youth, felt the beauty of himself as a part of all things beautiful, and he wanted to offer himself to her. That was his supreme desire—to offer himself to her. He wanted to enter her presence, go forward with light tread, kneel before her and with his eyes in hers become her possession.

And not for one instant did he lose sight of the fact that it was the love fever leading him on. Only the sweetness of it, the tender compassion of it, had staggered him. He was baffled.

He found her alone.

CHAPTER VII

To his surprise she sprang up with an excited resentful countenance, made a spring and planted herself in front of him.

"Where have you been?" she inquired sharply, "why have you treated Nelly so?"

"Nelly?"

He had forgotten Nelly and looked what he felt, stunned, stupefied. But stunned and stupefied by her.

She attempted to arouse him.

"Why," she exclaimed as though it were already her part to call him to account, "have you acted as you have?"

"How?" He had taken both her hands.

"Remaining away from Nelly!"

"Nelly?"

"Of course, Nelly! Have you forgotten her existence?"

"Yes!"

"Are you ill?"

"Yes, very."

"Why didn't you let her know?"

"Who?"

"Nelly!"

"I couldn't!"

"Did you get her notes?"

"Yes, all of them!"

"And her telephone calls?"

"Yes," he was still holding her hands, "they were reported to me!"

"Did you know Mr. Elsworth called?"

"Yes, I got his card."

"What," and she peered into his eyes while trying to free her hands, "is the matter with you?"

"I love you!"

She freed herself.

"Have you gone mad?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes. I have been mad for over a week. From the moment I saw you I was mad. I love you!"

"Hush!" and she glanced nervously to the door. "Don't you know what you are saying," and she peered at him with her brow contracted into a frown, "is terrible!"

"Perhaps it is. I don't care, though!" A strange far away look came into his eyes, a look of power that beclouded them. "I don't care!" he repeated. "Come what may I am going to expend my love, the love I took from you, upon *you!*"

"You took from me?"

"Yes!"

"You are blaming me?"

"Yes, you are to blame! Is not my condition due to you? You gave me this love, didn't you?"

"*Gave* it to you?"

"Yes, you gave it to me! Until the moment my eyes rested upon you I was a sane, reasoning being. I haven't been since. I've been insane, in a delirium, bereft of reason, a thing I said would never happen to me! I am," he bent his face to hers, "madly in love with you, and nothing in this world except you makes the least difference to me! I've forgotten everything. I've forgotten everybody I ever considered. Through you dormant qualities in my being have awakened. I have become absolutely selfish, abandoned. If thwarted I could be a villain at a moment's notice. If someone came between you and me I could murder without the least qualm of conscience. I would not care about the person or the murder. I cannot care for anything but you! I can't resist these awakened feelings, and I can't resist you! I don't want to resist you! I want only to see you—be where you are! I am possessed of the desire to serve you, make you happy. I am going to do both—serve you and make you happy!" And he laughed.

"Hush!" she breathed again. And closing her eyes in alarm she pressed the back of a hand to her brow.

She stood quite a while thus, and then opening her eyes looked squarely at him.

"You don't even know me!" she said.

"I don't want to know you! I want to love you!"

"You must not say these things to me!" she breathed in a whisper.

"They are said already!"

"But it's all madness!" she repeated and seemed of a sudden to take in the whole significance of the situation.

Her eyes were startled. They blazed, partly through fear, partly through resentment. He was dominating her, as it were, commanding her to play false. She thoroughly resented this. But she was afraid, horribly afraid that she would obey, was already obeying him!

"Madness!" she repeated irrelevantly, her eyes once more travelling to the open door.

"Of course," he answered her, "it is madness! Love is madness! I am completely abandoned to madness, and I am going to take you into my madness, make you become mad, too! I am," his voice lowered, "going to take you into my dream, into my illness! You are going to nurse it—nurse me through it!"

"Your illness?" she half gasped.

"Yes! Don't you know love is illness? *You* were ill with love when I met you! I took the disease from you, and now *you* are to bear the consequences!"

She laughed a quite mad laugh, insolent, defiant.

"I?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," he caught up one of her hands rather fiercely, "you! The woman always bears the consequences of the love she provokes, doesn't she?"

Her face softened and she stared reproachfully at him, helplessly fascinated by all the subtle charm of his strange words and young set face.

"That is ungenerous," she said faintly.

"Of course it is!" There was no softening in his face. "Love," and he threw her hand rather roughly away, "is ungenerous! Love knows no generosity, no consideration, no honour! I know because since I loved you I care nothing for those things!"

"Hush!" she repeated a third time. "What about Nelly?"

"I care nothing for Nelly!"

"Her father?"

"I care nothing for him!"

"Me? What about me?"

"I care nothing for you! I love you and am absolutely indifferent to what may befall you on account of my love, indifferent to any harm, any disaster that may happen to you through me! Do you understand? I care for nothing but my love for you, and all, while it lasts, it is to yield of delight for both of us! That is my love! In my opinion that only is love!"

"You are mad, quite mad!" She could only harp upon this.

"I have not denied it."

She wrung her hands.

"It's all terrible," she exclaimed, "terrible!"

"It is! Love is terrible! It is all things! And," he paused, "we must discuss them!"

"Discuss them?" Her voice was weak.

"Yes. We will dine at my flat and talk everything over." He spoke mechanically, as one in a trance.

"Your flat?"

"Yes, that is quite all right. I entertain there. Nelly and her father were there. Hurry—go and get your things—your hat! We must leave before anyone comes in! Hurry, will you?"

She stood gazing in his eyes. They were just a tiny bit bloodshot, and the crimson bar lay upon each cheek. It was a beautifully flushed face even to the eyes, a face reflecting the smouldering fever that was upon him.

She gave herself up to the hypnotic charm of such a face, stood staring into it quite a while, and then without a word turned and went for her things.

In the street they walked rapidly like two fugitives escaping justice. Once or twice she wondered why they were walking, why he didn't take a taxi, even a car. But to these thoughts no answer came. She just walked by his side rapidly, a bit breathlessly, her heart beating violently.

The sweetness of the twilight was a fitting end to a day full of seductive charm. The sky was tranquil, peaceful, as though pronouncing a benediction on the departure of a perfect day. A big star came out. She glanced at it, wanted to speak of it, but said nothing.

Suddenly, however, on a corner she stopped.

"You are walking too fast for me," she said, and put her left hand over her heart.

"Am I? Forgive me!" He looked at her and laughed. "I did not know that I was walking at all!"

A look of terror swept her features.

"Let me go back!" she exclaimed. "I must go back!"

"Let you go back?" He looked at her passionately, dreamily, and then he laughed again.

He had a distinctive laugh, musically guttural. It contained a sensuous note now that touched her from her head to her feet, played thus upon her nerves.

"Ah!" she breathed like one responding helplessly to anæsthetic. "Nelly—her father—"

He laughed again, harshly now, and took hold of her elbow.

"My father too," he said, "and my sister—and you and me—all of us! You can tell me nothing that has not all been rehearsed during the past week, and you can tell me nothing that will make me care! I live just across there!" And he pointed to a three-story stone mansion, famous in other days as the home of a statesman, now changed to apartments. "Come on!"

CHAPTER VIII

In his big square room, with the old-fashioned marble mantle that had pallid white roses on its base, and that had become by the drop of pale blue damask curtains a drawing-room, she stood suddenly drunk upon its charm, the strange blending of gentle tones that made harmony for the soul.

As to expensiveness there was

nothing here to compare to almost any tiny quarter of Nelly's home. But there was nothing there to take the breath away, render one drunk in one instant upon colour, upon tone blending, nothing to produce the effect of wines. It was a simple habitation made from a stray product of his brain, into which he had woven his dream, and great or small, that is all that any habitation can be.

He took her light wrap from her, and her hat, and disappeared with them behind the blue curtains, returning himself bereft of the spring overcoat and hat, slender as a young god, pale now, save for the flush that still lingered in his eyes.

With these eyes gazing in hers he smiled the masculine smile, sweet, commanding and cruel, the kind of smile that has ever proven, and must ever prove—this trick of nature's, a man's smile—the undoing of women.

In an adjoining room she could hear the almost silent laying of the table. She never forgot the sound of this, faint, respectful, the sound of perfect service.

In the future she used to wonder why her mind so often reverted to it.

CHAPTER IX

When dinner was over, a very delightful dinner selected by him with that care that the artist is ever impelled to give to details, a dinner lightly partaken of, scarcely partaken of, and punctuated by some kind of a golden coloured wine without sparkle, he conducted her back to the room he loved so well.

There he made her stand for a moment or two beneath the massive old-fashioned crystal chandelier that had pendants that caught blue and pink and purple reflections, and jingled faintly to any tread on the floor above. He seemed to place her there for the light to shower upon her, to saturate her in light. This accomplished he led her to a broad deep davenport covered in cream-coloured silk, flowered all over with pink roses in full bloom.

Having seated her tenderly, as one places a rare material object, he moved off with that grace of manner that was one of his principal assets, and having shut off the light of the glittering chandelier, he switched on that of a tall standing lamp that forced its reflection through a pink shade. When he returned and drew his chair up in front of her, she was in the reflection of this soft glow shadow, he on the outside of it.

The next moments were rare ones for Arline. Since her arrival, all during the dinner, a consciousness of the situation in which she found herself had been upon her. Her heart had beat changefully with her thoughts, her thoughts as to why she had been induced to do this thing, came here, her thoughts of Nelly, of Nelly's father, of the peculiar circumstances of her being out at the dinner hour and leaving no word, all the, at moments frantic thoughts, of a person who has, without a moment's notice, tumbled headlong into the impossible.

She had spoken of these things at random, fitfully, as one trying to establish a bearing. Once she sprang up declaring that she must leave at once, declaring this in a fit of terror, as though the whole significance of everything with its far reaching effects was suddenly upon her, as though she were suddenly confronting everything and everybody and being held responsible. She had told him something like this, that as the woman the responsibility would be upon her, that unless she returned at once, unless they turned back, she would be considered, would resolve into, the undoing of them all.

To her outburst he had remained silent, regarding her through a play of expressions on a face alluringly fascinating in its indifference, silent to all her alarms, qualms, or whatever it was that she felt she was being attacked by. When she sprang to her feet, he had merely looked at her quietly, a bit cynically, until with an abandonment to

helplessness she took from his hand the glass of wine he extended her and reseated herself.

That there was a spell upon the room in which they now were, the room in which he gave out his thoughts, there could be no doubt. For once inside of it, away from the table, away from reminders of the fact that she was a rational person, she suddenly almost became not one. Above all, beyond the charm of him and what he was offering —a thoroughly romantic and wholly irrational love—there was in the situation itself a peculiar fascination. She was one of those who had always longed to let go, longed to free herself from what might be termed legitimate obligation. She was one of those who longed to live extraneously, uniquely, irrationally. And she had never actually known a moment's freedom in her life! She had lived in accordance with the order of things into which she was born, that manner of behaviour, and deportment in every way. And in a breath the magician of her dreams had appeared and swept all these things away!

Seated there on the big davenport covered in roses in full bloom, and in the reflection of a rose coloured light, she was possessed suddenly of indifference, his indifference, the kind he had manifested in every word, look or gesture, since he had sheltered her beneath his roof. It took her, for the time being, completely off her feet. It left her in a dream.

"Where are we?" she asked with a far off smile as one recovering from a faint.

"We are together," he answered her.

"Together?" she inquired vaguely.

"Yes. Do you know what that means? It means that in one brief hour we have created a new world!"

"A new world," she said, partly recovering herself and clasping her strangely ardent white hands, "that fills me with fear."

"When," he returned, "you love me as I do you, your fear will be cast out. You will not think of those things that cause fear, but only of me! Think of the wonder of that! For the time being I can think only of you."

"For the time being?"

"Yes, I would lie to you if I told you that man's love was other than transitory. That is a truth that woman should recognize in order to take all its sweetness while it does last. Love is a delirium that calls us to a recognition of our senses. Without the illumination of love we only half use our senses; often ignore them entirely. That is the whole value of love. It quickens every sense so that in reality a new world exists for the affected, or, shall I say," and he smiled, "the inspired. Dear beautiful one, what is your name?"

"Arline."

"Love, Arline, to man is a temporary feast afforded the senses, a period when all our daily life must make way for a transient and often disastrous hour."

"Men have died for love!" she burst forth.

"No," he returned, "of the ennui of enforced love."

They were silent after this while the fear again stole to her eyes, the kind of look one might have on accepting the dream potion that must end in death. Many men had spoken to her of love, even alarmed her by vehement expressions of love. But while his alarmed her, it, also, interested her, the kind of fascinated interest that one experiences while walking on the edge of a precipice. He was bringing her, in fact, to just the point he wanted to bring her, the point of recklessness, the point of a perilous adventure that would be to her irresistible.

"Man's love," he took up dreamily, "is solely a feast of the senses. I shall be content to indulge mine one at a time. To-night, for instance, I will satisfy my eyes—only my eyes! They are the part of me—my eyes—that have suffered most and served me best. It was through my eyes, perhaps, that love came to me. They then shall first be comforted and rewarded. During this, our first evening together, I want

only a look at you, only to behold you! What a wonderful thing is sight! How more than wonderful that I can in this moment look upon you! Just think, I can close my eyes," he did so, "and then open them," he did so, "and see you!"

He spoke gleefully, rapturously, banishing for her all sense of wrong, all sense of anything but joy. And it must not be forgotten that his task was not difficult after all, for as he had loved her from the moment of meeting, she had, also, loved him, and in her woman's way, which is far more. This he had not even questioned, felt no need now to question. All had been arranged for them, for them both, in one instant, by that secret force of nature, back of all human impulse, that secret force of nature ever on guard, ever on watchful duty, to pounce upon suitable material to carry out her plans. That they both loved, that all things were ready for love's experiences, had from the very first been a settled conviction in the mind of the young author now so entirely bent upon putting into practice his unique theories concerning love, now so entirely bent upon letting the fever of his being run its course.

"How grateful I am to you," he took up gracefully in his well modulated voice, "for being so beautiful! I could die for you simply that you are so prodigal, such a spendthrift of beauty! Who gave you such beauty? Where did it all come from? Where," and he smiled, "did *you* come from? Beauty, such beauty as yours, glorifies love! It makes us know its value. You are not listening! You are afraid. The look of alarm is flashing like lightning in your eyes. But that is beautiful; it fascinates me; I like to see you alarmed, frightened! You are like a caught bird! But do not be afraid—be happy! Let me repeat to you, you have nothing to fear! I asked you to come here because, as I told you, we must discuss this love that has overtaken us, this wondrous thing that has happened, entirely independent of any planning on our part, happened as the sun rises and as our hearts beat! Fear on your part is useless. It is perfectly futile fear for I shall not let you get away from me—do not for one instant dream of that! But it is for you to say, you who are responsible, what we must do about it!"

"For me to say?"

"Yes, you, of course! Shall we marry? Must a man speak some words over us, or shall we leave ourselves during this wonderful period of our existence in the hands of the gods? *I* prefer that! I could conceive marriage with Nelly, but not with you! What do you say?"

"Marriage?" asked Arline, recalling her past experiences with a shudder. "No, no, no, do not go so far! We have, it seems, been blown into this evening. We will recover," she looked about her, "get our footing, our bearings! Did you have your servant telephone that I had been called to Mrs. Walraven who is ill?"

"Yes! You are still concerned about the loophole of escape? Listen! You will never escape me until my love for you is over, until the fever to possess you has died out!"

"Died out?" she asked with a drawing together of her beautiful brows, a facial trick he had already become familiar with and that he found exciting.

It was a frown, but it shot a light from her eyes that penetrated him like a dagger, setting in motion the poison. For a moment he closed his eyes to revel silently. When he opened them they caught hers in a fascinated stare on his face.

"It is you who are beautiful," she murmured.

"Am I? Do you find me so? Do you love me? Give me your hand! No, not to hold, only that I may place it on the polished arm of this seat for me to see!"

He laid it however on his palm, white and waxlike, it seemed a flower resting upon bronze.

"Ah!" he breathed, "when the time comes for me to indulge the sense of

touch! When the time comes for me to kiss this hand! When *that* time comes! Then my eyes shall have drunk their full; my ears shall have known every tone of your voice, the sound of your laughter, the gasp in your tears—oh, yes, you will shed tears, tears of ecstasy—Arline!"

"Yes!" Her eyes clung to his.

"Oh! the joy of exploiting you, exploiting you slowly, the sublimity of the privilege of knowing through another the value of yourself, all one's possibilities for bliss, all one's capacity for joy! People, the majority, do not know how to love! They snatch at its delights as rude men snatch lunch at a lunch counter. Love should be indulged as a fair woman embroiders, slowly, carefully, every stitch considered, until beautiful flowers and strange figures exist. I shall take my love that way, weaving a flower for every hour, content: more content the slower I weave my flowers! And I shall take my love as the earth takes the arrival of the sun! There shall be the dawn in its effulgence, the mid-day in its splendour, and its death in tragic weariness!"

"It's death?"

"It's death, of course!" He laughed a boyish laugh, the laugh of a boy in a cruel moment. "Love *must* die! We have things to do in this world! Do you suppose I could live my allotted years and fill my ordained tasks if I remained in my present condition?" And he laughed again.

"That," he went on, "would be impossible! If only," and a dark frown settled across his brow and eyes, "love did last, could last, this world of purgatory would be a heaven! Love is a divine drunk, what you have termed madness, what I term the delirium of a fever! You do think me mad," and he smiled mischievously at her, "don't you?"

"I know you are! I know that I am! Let me go!"

She sprang to her feet.

Now altogether in a merry mood, that merry mood that is the sweetest overflowing to a woman of man's love, he also sprang up and playfully forced her to sit again.

"Presently," he said, with his hands pressed to her shoulders, "you shall go! But before," he took his seat, "talk to me a bit! I find my ears must be indulged, too, just a little cheating as far as my eyes go! Do you really think me good looking! Tell it to me again! Or say that I am plain in your sight! Say anything so that I may listen to you speak! Your voice penetrates all my being! It floats about me like incense! Speak! Do you love me? Tell me that"; and he bent forward, "Speak! Do you love me?"

"Yes," she whispered, leaning forward to him, "I love you!"

Her eyes closed. . . . He had charmed her. He, with his youth, his beauty, his own musical voice, he with the love fever burning, had charmed her into abandonment. In the moment she forgot all things: Nelly, her father, herself, the position they were in to one another. She was abandoned to her moment. She saw the room vaguely; the blue curtains swayed before her eyes; the pink glow from the lamp shade blinded her; the marble mantel, pink, too, in the reflection of the lamp shade, made her dizzy. She was in his dream, as he had said she must be, would be.

She put out her hands and slightly parting her lips offered them to him.

"You would not be a woman," he murmured, bending his face to hers, "if you did not offer reward for my worship! My ears have stolen from my eyes—my lips must steal from my ears! The sight of you and the sound of your voice are sweeter than the kisses of all the combined women of the world! And yet! Forgive me! I am not content with that which is sweeter than the combined kisses of all women! You make me untrue to myself, untrue to my promise to you! I must kiss you! I must!"

The face and eyes lingered above hers and then slowly, deliberately, as he had told her all expressions of love

on his part would be, he laid his lips gently upon hers in a kiss that became, it would seem, a bond to hold them there forever.

A moment later, as her reward, he gave her his smile, gave it through eyes and lips, with his face still close to hers.

With a light playful tap then upon her shoulder he sprang off behind the blue curtains, and returned merry as a young Adonis after successful ventures, with her outdoor things.

CHAPTER X

ARLINE rolled home in the taxi dreamily, and on her arrival she told her first lie. She said that her friend Mrs. Walraven was very ill indeed.

On reaching her room, when she found herself alone, the effect of this lie, that she had told a deliberate lie, pretty nearly stunned her.

Arline was one of those strained Southern characters who considered a lie a crime. Her parents, who had not hesitated to hand her over in marriage, as a speculation, to an inferior, had taught her to honour her parents, to be truthful, and not to steal. She honoured her parents, in spite of certain incomprehensible characteristics, their tendency to strain at gnats and swallow camels; she had never knowingly lied, and it never occurred to her that a decent person—by decent Arline meant well-born—could steal.

She was anything but worldly, anything but one of those so used to small lies that an out-and-out genuine one comes without a shock, comes, in fact, quite naturally. . . . She was a beautiful soul and she had done other things besides telling her first lie that shocked her. She had spent the first wholly selfish evening of her life. Perhaps her only real self-indulgence was her passion for burning candles—living in the presence of flames, walking about and between flames, or sitting and lying with her eyes upon them fascinated. This indulgence, a strange individual call, as she said, from the invisible, she had granted herself a bit apologetically at first, but gradually as her one right.

"An open fireplace with a fire burning and my candle lit!" she often exclaimed as though proclaiming herself in this manner.

Apart from this she was of a rather frugal turn of mind, as though to have too much were an injustice to others. She was intensely considerate of others, as sweet, in fact, as it was possible for a woman, and a very beautiful woman at that, to be. She had a passion for beautiful clothes and was given over to intoxication through vivid colouring. More often than not she satisfied this craving by gazing in shop windows, and upon her arrival home would find satisfaction in self-denial. She dressed beautifully, but very simply. She loved the things she wore and was very careful of them. She was altogether charming and she had never wronged an individual by a thought.

She stood in the pretty boudoir her friends had arranged for her, aghast at herself. Her evening had been one of treachery to both of these friends who had so graciously opened their hearts to her, even to sheltering her beneath their roof as a princess. . . . And she had lied to them to cover her tracks!

It is difficult for those not by nature such as she, and to one of her peculiar Puritanical training, to understand how absolutely overwhelmed she was by her, and that so wholly unexpected, deportment. She was like one who having passed through fire is amazed not to find himself scorched and scarred.

She walked over and by the aid of a street light that shone through the window examined herself in a mirror. A surprise greeted her. For the first time she was impressed by her own beauty. Something new had happened to her. She was marvellous in her pallor, in her shame, and in her passion.

She turned away, took the centre of the room, and spoke, in a low voice,

vows as to the future. What had happened would not be repeated! She would never go to that—the memory of it made her tremble—place again! She would never see *him* again!

She paused and looked about her startled and deeply troubled. She knew perfectly well that every word she had uttered was a lie added to the first one, that she had not meant one syllable she had spoken. She knew when the morrow came, memories of him, his appearance, his bearing, his personality, his boyishness, his smile, his partly expressed cruelty, his kiss—again her lips quivered—would take her there! She knew that she had only to think of the moment when he laid her hand upon his, and she would go. She knew that his merriment, his merriment alone, would drag her there!

She made her way to a chair, dropped into it and began to cry. . . . Her tears were not for herself. . . . She was crying about Nelly.

This girl, with fervour that a young girl experiences when she has made a warm friend of an older woman, had bared her soul to her. Nelly had made her her confidant, and the burden of all her song was her love for Winston. The child adored him?

She sprang to her feet.

"It's all monstrous," she said, "monstrous! I can't do it! I musn't!"

But she knew she would.

She knew perfectly well that not only would she sacrifice Nelly and shame the faith of Nelly's father, who expected her to be his wife, but that she would walk over burning ploughshares to fall into the arms of this man, this laughing fellow, who had told her at the door of the taxi that he would be waiting for her at six o'clock the following evening.

CHAPTER XI

"But," he said to her when a week had passed, "when love cares, when it can consider, it is no longer love! One is cured then—the fever is gone! You speak to me of Nelly. Nelly is no more to me than a butterfly sailing over flowers. You speak to me of her father. He is no more to me than a horse pulling a wagon. They exist for me negatively. You speak to me of yourself—your conscience. When has love ever considered the consequences to the beloved, or given heed to conscience? You ask me to consider, to be merciful, and all I see is you asking these things; all I am impressed by is the beauty and charm of you as you remonstrate and plead. You ask me to reason, to be warned, to be careful. And all I can do is to laugh in the face of such words! What have such words to do with love? You tell me our secret is safe! As though I cared whether it is safe or not! You repeat to me that they still believe me to be away and that you are nursing your sick friend. My answer is that I do not care what they believe! I care only to register the tones of your voice while you speak! I have allowed the deception to go on in deference to *your* prayers! You do not know how infinitely sweet you are when you plead! My fancy is tickled! I do not know whether to laugh or cry, or kiss your feet! Left to me I would tell them—the butterfly and the dray horse—the truth and then telegraph it to the entire world. A man loves, and because he loves the world and all the people in it mean nothing to him! A man loves so that he cannot even consider his love, her welfare or her future. He can consider only being where she is! He cares nothing about what happens to her, or to him, or to others, but only what *is happening!* Do you remember your promise to me last night?"

"I made so many!" she broke forth, a bit hysterical from his outburst. "You asked of me a *thousand* things!"

"Which I have forgotten! Except this: you said to-night if I would be silent you would speak to me of your love, *your* love for *me!*"

He laid the back of her fingers to his lips and held them there.

"Speak," he said finally, "tell me of

your love, this love that bears the vagaries and cruelty of man's, and cannot die—this strange thing called woman's love that cannot be killed!"

They were seated in a favourite spot of his, one of those pretty places that look like frontless arbours one runs across on the way to the Capitol.

The night was warm, a bit sultry, a bit damp. The sky, through mist, looked like a velvet canopy sprinkled with pearls. The trees had recently given birth to myriads of leaves, little baby hands, Arline had called them, and the vine that covered the arbour and hung down like an awning had also given birth to its baby hands. There was, or Arline had said so, a smell of orris in the air.

Winston had found fault with the evening. He liked the Capitol snow-white in moonlight, not the ashen grey, indistinct appearance it now presented.

Arline had agreed that the scene was perhaps not so beautiful as when moonlit, but, she thought, it was softer, tenderer to-night, than she had ever seen it. It seemed to her, she said, they were wrapped in warm fragrant clouds. She said she could hardy breathe.

This was quite true. Arline was almost afraid to breathe in the situation in which she found herself. She lived in terror; every breath she drew was one of terror. Every eye seemed upon her. For quite a while after their arrival at this lonely spot of his selection, this spot where he had insisted upon bringing her, she had been actually disturbed by the presence of a solitary miserable looking old man who had occupied a distant corner of one of the chain of benches. Her eyes kept straying to him, and when the sad inoffensive old soul moved off with that manner of one with nowhere to go, she confided to Winston that it was a great relief to her.

"I am afraid of my own shadow!" she had added with a nervous laugh.

"And I," he laughed back, "am ready to face the whole world without fear! This is *my* hour. All I feel for the rest of the world is pity, pity that they, the whole world, cannot be me with you by my side to love!"

They sat in silence after this until she had begun again with her protest that they *should* care for others, her protest that had brought forth his impassioned reply and his reminder that she was to tell him to-night of her love.

He again reminded her.

"Tell me," he pleaded, "of your love for me. Tell me that it matches mine!"

"It is far greater than yours," she breathed. "You feel no wrong and love. I suffer the wrong of it every moment and still love! Since the day we met I can only repeat we have both acted like mad people!"

"I have not denied that! We have both been mad! But mad people, remember, are not to be held responsible!"

She turned a strangely pale face to him.

"Do you love me as much as before last night?" she whispered.

"More! Far more! Before last night I did not know how generous you could be! As long as my love lasts you could not do anything that would make me love you less!"

"As long as it lasts?" she said, her voice again lowered to a whisper.

"Surely. Have I tried to deceive you? Have I said once that such love can last, that it would? That would be impossible! As impossible as that the world could continue on its way with a perpetual lightning storm in the sky! Man's love is the lightning storm of his being, my own beloved! It illumines, it rips and tears, it destroys, and it expires! Because that is true, because my love cannot last, make the most of it now!"

Some young birds above their heads awoke, chirped a moment and were still.

"And what of me? When this love of yours is passed?" she asked, a gleam of pain coming to her eyes that seemed to light up space.

"I don't know!" he laughed. "I don't even care for that! I care only for the present—the present hour!

Love, as I have just told you, is the storm that rages in a man and—passes! I love you now and that is all I know, or care to know! I am so consumed by my love for you that I cannot even care what happens to you, or will happen! All that I pray to you is—prolong my love! Keep me in fever, keep me mad, keep me indifferent even to you!"

"Indifferent to me?" echoed Arline.

"Surely. Indifferent to you and all things! Man's love is selfish," he seemed calling upon registered thoughts, "no man ever, my sweet Arline, loved unselfishly. No man ever continued in love! Devotion, perhaps, yes, devotion, I know I will always feel for you! Devotion, gratitude, many beautiful things, but love, that is different, Arline! Take what I have to give now and bear the consequences, for that is all the perfection of life that can come to a woman! Tell me, was not last night worth a thousand years? Life consists of moments—why care about the years? "Tell me," he said impulsively after a slight pause, "is it true that like me you never loved before?"

"Never!" solemnly. "I have known only the shame and distress of surrender without love! Last night how I wanted to talk to you of this! I want to talk to you now—tell you many things! I want you to know me just as I am—have always been! I think I was different," she went on sweetly. "As a child I was peculiar. I mean in this way: I always wanted particular things, never in general anything very much, but particular things! I'll give you an example," she laughed a little, "a silly one! It was the custom at our home to bring to the parlour in the evening a silver bowl of apples. Everybody did, I believe, I mean all our neighbours, it was the custom, and it was my habit when the basket came in to pick out the particular apple that I wanted.

"Of course, being a child, the basket came to me last, or among the last, and if before it got to me anyone took *my* apple I was secretly enraged. I wanted to strike the person! I instinctively felt that any other would have satisfied that person equally well, and that only that one would have satisfied me. I have watched a certain fruit ripen on a tree in the same way, or a flower open, oblivious of all the others. My nature has ever demanded something to concentrate upon! And so—"

"Yes, Arline?"

His voice stirred her, his voice reminding her of the night before, and for a while she remained silent.

"Go on, my sweet!"

"I was speaking of concentration," she answered vaguely. "To concentrate on a human being has been more difficult for me than upon things: fruits, flowers, any beautiful thing. Always there was something disturbing, always something came between. There was a lack of harmony, of colouring, of —as in a fruit, or flower—perfection. The shape of an ear," and she laughed, "the curve of a finger, some defect in the nostrils, an ill-shaped tooth, the growth of the hair on the temple. The tiniest thing disturbed my effort, cut off the stream of joy that I builded upon, so that, while excited by the search and temporarily affected by certain qualities or characteristics, I have existed in a series of disappointments. Do you understand me?"

"Yes!"

"I was always looking for someone *perfect* to love, someone who would please the eye, the ear, the touch, the intellect, the soul, the heart, at one and the same time, someone who could appeal to *all* in me, every mood of me like Wagner's music does. I wanted Wagner's music, tender, loud, full of wailing, full of blast, but always harmonious, in a human being, and I couldn't find it. If I found the intellect satisfied my eye was offended. If I found beauty my brain starved and grew irritated. I wanted so much! People always told me I wanted too much! In reality—"

"Yes, Arline?"

"I wanted you!"

"Did you, my darling?"

"I have been wanting you all my life, and the instant I saw you I knew that all my desires could be realized through you. Is it any wonder I forgot everything? So many years I had searched! So long I had been discouraged! But still, always hoping. I was like a miner who digs for the diamond, grasping at false things, shining rocks, bits of ore, examining each, but to throw it away, still never losing faith, always believing just as when I was a little girl I always believed the prince would appear in the forest before me if only I waited long enough. As I grew up the whole world became my forest and at last my dream was realized—I found you! You appeared and every doubt vanished! I knew that you were my dream come true at last!"

"And yet," said Winston thoughtfully, "your first words to me were of another—of Nelly! All your anxiety was for her!"

"That is true! It is perfectly natural to me to think of others! And besides, I wanted to keep things intact! Why shouldn't I? Oh!" and she wrung her hands, "didn't I tell you, didn't I tell you from the very first, that it is all terrible—terrible! Think what I have done! Think of what we both have done!"

She looked at him, her eyes filled with the alarm he was beginning to associate with them.

"We have loved!" he said quietly.

"We have loved yes, but at what a cost! At what a cost to Nelly."

Tears suddenly rolled down her cheeks and she reached over nervously for one of his hands and finding it pressed it to her lips.

"How could I help but take you?" she cried upon it.

"How *could* I? How could I?" she repeated over and over.

"You couldn't! And still, after all, you didn't take me! I took you! Don't you remember on the corner you wanted to go back and I laughed at you? I have not forgiven you," he became playful, "that moment of prudence!"

"Oh! but I am prudent now! More—I am terrified! Can't you *see* how awful it is?"

"I don't want to see," he said abstractedly and looked about him.

All was silent and dark. People, even those resembling shadows, had departed and clouds had covered the stars. The air felt more damp. He took her in his arms tenderly, lingeringly, as the artist lifts his bow leisurely, gathering with a slow motion magnetism for it, and pressed his lips to hers.

While he kissed her thus her mind reverted to the high note she once heard a tenor hold so long that she trembled for him. She was trembling now for herself, trembling that she was not equal to such bliss, not equal, yet holding on. Tears gathered in her eyes. She was tremendously sorry for herself.

When he released her she cried while holding on to him with taut arms.

Suddenly she recognized that her tears were not for herself, but for Nelly. She knew she would no longer consider Nelly, that she was lost to consideration of others. At this thought, hatred, hatred that is a part of passion, of him filled her, hatred of his dominion, his cruelty, his power. She was stabbed by these things into bitter resentment. It made her vibrant, wild; the animal in her leaped. His form was so frail she felt she could crush it with one pressure of her strong arms. But even with the burning of hate for all he had done, for all he was making her do, with her countenance blurred, a bit stupid, less beautiful, she lifted her mouth to him. . . .

He teased her, held back his kiss, smiled in her eyes—that smile that is woman's undoing—until her hands went convulsively to the back of his neck. He laughed, made her struggle, and—kissed her.

"Ah!" she breathed, freeing herself and rubbing her eyes with her knuckles

like one trying to awake, return to normal. "I will suffer for this! I feel it! I know it! I will suffer for it all my life!"

"And all your life," he breathed upon her lips, "you will remember last night!"

She looked at him a moment, apparently dazed.

"Last night," she said, finally, "will hasten my doom! It is the women who have not much to give who hold men the longest, the women who can't wholly enslave themselves, whose paltry natures leave them partly free. It is," and she, too, seemed to call upon registered thoughts, "the women overgenerous in love whom men desert and forsake the quickest!"

"What hour will you come to me to-morrow?"

Why the effect of his voice? Why must she feel faint when he spoke?

"What hour to-morrow?" she said blankly.

"Yes. It is absurd for you to think of resisting, of not coming. I am expecting by then an answer to a letter I have written to a beautiful place in the mountains, a mountain valley place. We must go away for the summer, you know!"

"Go away for the summer?"

"Surely. We cannot keep up this deception. If detected we would be interrupted—bothered. I cannot," and a look, that might have been interpreted as a touch of his fever, crossed his features, "think of such a thing!"

"You think only of yourself!" she protested, with a flash of anger as she saw all of a sudden the havoc he was planning.

"Love always thinks of itself," he answered. "When it begins to think of others it is as I have just told you on the wane. I have told you I am in a condition, a frame of mind, body and soul, I don't know what it is, when I cannot think. I do not want to think! I want only to love and take your love! Listen, Arline, our present moments are too rare to be questioned. Don't question! Do you," he took her shoulders in a strong grasp, "suppose for one moment that while I am a madman I would let you escape me?" And he laughed merrily. "Don't even think of trying to escape me!"

"I can't try!" exclaimed Arline, merry, also, yet bitter. "I can't resist you! If I am alarmed and terrified by what we have done, what wonder? You must not forget that I, too, am mad! The difference between us is that I do hold myself responsible! Tell me! What are we going to do?"

"Go away," he smiled, "to this beautiful place I have written to and be perfectly happy while we can! What difference does our being happy make in the great plan of the universe?"

"The universe? I am thinking of Nelly and her father; the girl you are engaged to be married to, and the man I am engaged to be married to!"

"What difference do they make?" And he laughed again.

"They will be crushed by it, made unhappy. To-day that child is bewildered, that is the word, bewildered! You should see her watching me, see her eyes as they travel over me, or search mine! I believe she knows: I know she suspects!"

"How beautiful you are when you think of others! How beautiful you will be in the country! I see the grass spreading out from you, the trees bending over you, the flowers blooming for you wherever you pass!"

"But we *must* think of others!"

"There are no others! There is a beautiful world and you and me!"

He pointed to a star that had penetrated the clouds, one large luminous star that seemed to be imbedded in a clear lake of its own.

"It's billions of miles away," he bent over and whispered to her, "and there are billions more! If we separate to-night they will go on their way just the same!"

He seemed to make her see this, succeed in making the moment one of complete oblivion, oblivion, however, replete with terror. She sat perfectly

still, her eyes fixed on the star. When she turned them a bit hopelessly upon him, he knew that the summer was his. She was no longer responsible. . . . She would do as he said.

A strange thing happened then. He saw her six months ahead, had a vision of her, seated in this very spot alone—with her memories. A bit of a shudder passed over him. It's all, he thought, very wonderful, what is and what will be. Her memories of me must be that I was tender. That is all that any man can do, the highest service he can render the woman he loves and abandons, see to it that her memories of him are saturated with his tenderness.

He was very tender with her. As they descended the broad marble steps she told him that flowers seemed to be blooming in the air, that such odours, such a perfume from flowers, had never reached her before. She kept breathing deeply, and turning her head at intervals to get fleeting glimpses of his profile, a bit sharp through its slenderness, a profile that drugged her. . . .

CHAPTER XII

NEVER was there a sweeter morning in Washington than the one that ushered in June.

The warm days of the latter part of May had simply rushed things into bloom and in yards and parks the early summer flowers, fragile and ethereal, were holding high revel in the sunshine. It was divine, people were saying or thinking, and the birds were darting about in and out of every tree and ledge.

It seemed that only little Nelly was destined this morning not to rejoice. Nelly, the little butterfly of Winston's imaginings, and Nelly's father, the grim dray horse.

There was no lack of sunshine in the dining-room where they sat at the breakfast table, for Mr. Elsworth was one of those who insisted upon open blinds and highly raised shades in the mornings. The sun was allowed to enter through lace curtains, and these same lace curtains had embroidered the table cloth with patches of light.

Nelly, a woeful little figure beside a tremendously filigreed coffee urn nearly as large as herself, had just remarked to her father over his paper that the dazzling light almost hurt her eyes.

Nelly was not looking as pretty as once she looked. Her little face as a matter of fact pretty merely in its youth and smiles, was almost old looking, and such a thing as a smile had not crossed Nelly's at present prim set little mouth in several weeks. She wore a white cashmere morning gown with blue ribbons, and over hair, that was pinned up in little curls, a boudoir cap of white lace that flapped and was not at all becoming to her.

Her father, in his dark brown suit, and heavy watch-chain, might be said to suggest a liver-coloured dray horse that he had been, barring the mention of the colour, likened to. There is a strong possibility that had Winston looked in at the present moment, he would surely have thought of the horse and likened Nelly perhaps not to a butterfly, but to a little white mouse. At any rate, there they were, one miserable, the other provoked, and both as rich as cream.

It was only the day before that Mrs. Branscombe had left, ostensibly, or so Nelly thought, to return to her ailing friend. And a little later the expressman had called and brought a note from Mrs. Branscombe asking for her trunk and saying she would explain all later.

Imagine Nelly's surprise, when upon reaching Mrs. Branscombe's room, she found her two large trunks packed, locked, and even strapped.

When they were gone, Nelly had stood for quite a while the central figure of half burned, and now, of course, unlit candles, until suddenly the whole truth dawned upon her. The rest of the day had been a terrible one for Nelly, and the night—for she had not closed her eyes—even worse. No wonder she was this morning, while

bravely confronting her household obligations, a woeful little figure with all her beauty, such as it was, eclipsed.

When a mind, such a mind as Nelly's for instance, untrained to thought, tries to think deeply and figure out mysterious things, it is apt to leave marks, unbecoming ones at that, upon not too pronounced features.

What Nelly was trying to discover, while awaiting the entrance of the butler with the accustomed bacon and eggs or what not, was—she knew what *she* thought—what *her father* was thinking. That he *was* thinking was evidenced by his silence and the fact that he had neither pulled her ears or her nose this morning.

She had just parted her lips, the little lips that quivered at the thought of framing words, to ask that very thing, when a servant entered bearing a tray containing a single letter as the morning's mail.

"Papa!" said Nelly springing to her feet, her blue eyes become—since they rested upon the envelope—those of a little hawk, "it's from him! I know it! I know the writing!"

She was white before like a pale person, but now she was the white of a marble statue.

Said Nelly's father very quietly: "Well, what of it?"

"It's probably an explanation! We can now know where he is, why," and Nelly's voice was a pronounced sob, "he has acted as he has—treated me so!"

"I do not need this letter to explain to me where he is, or why, as you express it, he has treated you so!"

"You have known, papa!" And Nelly was beside him.

"Go back to your seat," he said sternly.

She did so, rapidly, just as everyone obeyed a command from Richard Elsworth.

"I will read you this letter, or you can read it yourself in good time! But you don't suppose for one instant, do you, that I, who have amassed a fortune out of the manœuvres, machinations, and weaknesses of humanity, haven't known what was going on under my roof?"

"You mean, papa—"

"That your friend Mrs. Branscombe has played me false, and your friend Mr. Stanley Winston has played you false, and if you and I want to get married we've got to settle down to two other fortune hunters!"

"Fortune hunters!" gasped Nelly.

"Of course, fortune hunters! You don't for an instant imagine that those two people we had agreed to buy for our entertainment cared anything about us, do you? He selected you for your money; she me for mine, and the two have simply got together and made fools of themselves."

Nelly was staring quite speechless at her father who went on:

"What's become of that little girl you used to go to school with—what's her name—Corinne Stanton!"

"Why, I saw her the other day, papa!"

"Well, she's a silly, sharp little thing looking out for money, no brains, but shrewd as you make 'em, and pretty as a wax doll! I'm going to put her in the place of the widow—she'll serve my purpose. And I'm going to put Ralph Frederick in your Mr. Winston's place to serve your purpose! I'm going to put these two new-comers in their relative positions pretty blamed quick, just as I have put traitors out of my office many and many a time and filled their places to advantage!"

"Papa!"

"No, you just pour me another cup of coffee, baby, and let your father talk! Those candles and a little too much blue blood atmosphere set me thinking before this thing happened. I am quite convinced that Corinne will be the better partner for me altogether. I can manage her better! And there's no question about Ralph, when you get down to business, being the better fellow for you. He's in my employ, given satisfaction, and I'm going to pay him fifty thousand dollars to marry you and take him in the business.

That's a practical arrangement and I never knew any other kind to pan out yet. You two girls will be happy and have babies, and what with the two babies, baby carriages, nurses, doctors coming and going if the babies sneeze, the place will be lively enough!"

"But, papa," and Nelly shoved her elbows against her sides and doubled her fists tragically, "I love him!"

"I'm coming, my baby, to that part! In my opinion to a level-headed person there isn't any such thing as love. Did you know there was a time on this earth when men and women never had any thoughts of love? What men call love is purely a conception of the human brain that has taken more fanciful shapes, and damned foolish forms, to upset God Almighty's plans more than anything the brain of man has invented. I want to tell you right now, my daughter, there isn't but one kind of love on this earth worth the paring of your finger nails, and that's," and Mr. Elsworth squared his shoulders and bent forward, a gesture known to the business world, "*self*-love! That's the love that nature intended for her purposes, and it's the only kind worth bothering about. When I was twenty-seven years old I had pretty well tested the love of everybody I had come in contact with. One morning, standing out in the open, I took a vow to love myself and love myself mighty well. At the end of two years I had twenty thousand dollars in the bank and I've been loving myself ever since, and I don't give a tinker's damn about anybody but myself! As a part of me, as my daughter, a chip of the old block, I want you to be that way too! Will you?"

"Papa!"

He raised a powerful hand and went on:

"People have said that I am a pretty good historian, Nelly. Perhaps I am. History is two-thirds how some man saw things all wrong. Nothing but prejudice reported, but if it hasn't done anything else, it has taught me that the best thing a man and woman can do in this world is to steer clear of the emotion called love! I'd just like to hear you," and Mr. Elsworth stood up with his back to the mantel, "after you get through with the contents of this letter say: To hell with love for anybody but *myself*, for anybody but Ellen Elsworth!"

"Let me see the letter, papa!"

And Nelly was in front of him, a breathless tragic little thing, not quite equal to the role of stoic outlined for her to follow.

He handed her the letter and this was what Nelly read, or attempted to read aloud:

"My Dear Mr. Elsworth:

"*For the time being I am a non-responsible human being. One of my theories is that any man in love is. Another of my theories is that all male love is transitory. The part I am playing to Mrs. Branscombe is even more reprehensible than my actions towards your daughter. I have induced Mrs. Branscombe to go away with me for the summer and I have deserted your daughter who I was honestly desirous of making my wife. I claim that I am in the delirium of a fever that I have nothing whatsoever to do with. I am merely an instrument of nature, unable at present to resist her laws. In a normal condition I respect myself as I respect my father and sister, your daughter and yourself. At present I respect nothing. I love! I cannot even express regrets for I have none.*

"*Respectfully,*

"Stanley Winston."

"Papa," cried Nelly, bursting into tears, "but this is beastly, beastly!"

"This love business always is, my dear."

Quite naturally Nelly's answer was to weep even more bitterly. Quite naturally her father took her in his arms and patted, with his broad, practical hand, the little Charlotte Corday cap. For in spite of his cold and analytical discussion of love and life, a discussion

solely for the sake of his daughter's welfare, he had passionately loved her mother, of whom Nelly was a feeble reproduction, and he loved his little girl very devotedly.

"We are going to begin business right away," he said, when Nelly's tears were partly dried, and she was standing apart from him, a palpitating little thing, "by having those two young people here to-night for dinner. After that we are going to some show or other to look on at nonsense. Will you go in for that? Will you get up and preside over a real fine, live dinner, with a smile, for me?"

"Yes, papa," answered Nelly, with another outburst of tears.

"All right, that's a good girl! And you leave it to me, Nelly, to your father, to look out for your happiness!"

He opened his strong arms to her again.

Nelly sprang into them and clung to his breast that seemed to her, had ever done so, to possess the strength of a stone wall.

"I'd like to break his neck," was what Mr. Elsworth muttered to himself a little later as he left the house.

"My little baby," he added with a tear starting to his eyes.

He was on his way—a man of action ever—to invite Ralph Frederick to dinner.

CHAPTER XIII

THE charming spot that Winston had spoken to Arline of on the eventful night of her surrender to his plans was a very charming hotel in the heart of the mountains.

About two weeks after their arrival summer was in full bloom, and not very much more can be said for summer, or, for that matter, anything vouchsafed man.

Summer in full bloom is summer in a state of rhapsody.

Love in full bloom is love in a state of rhapsody, and that was the condition of young Winston and Arline. That their rhapsodical condition affected them differently was most natural.

To her every sight was a wonder as though a summer in full bloom never had been before. Every flower, every waving tree, the field of wild flowers, or tender grain, those pale stretches of young wheat or oats or barley, the cold waters of shady places, the cascades of waters in the sunlight, the birds—all affected her like strong drink. She was gleeful, hysterical, unnaturally gay, or she was delightfully sad. A tear would spring to her eye over the simplest sight, any tenderness, an old man working, a child at play, or the heavens becoming serene at eventide.

Stanley Winston, likewise affected by things, was not at all so abandoned or given over. He was more intent upon grasping the moments to wring them dry of any sweetness they contained. He was more impatient of his experiences, less content to take things naturally, to fall into happenings. He was always planning moments to look forward to, was keen about selecting places to go, places for them to become separated from humanity and a part of nature itself. He saw to it that they took long motor rides, were at the top of a mountain at sunrise, that the boat was secured for the moonlight row. He was impatient if Arline manifested interest in anything whatsoever that surrounded her. Her entire interest must be centred upon him. In all things else he protected her from the slightest comment, but from the first he held her apart, refused to allow her to mingle with people, take part in things, bridge parties, excursions, and not once had he consented to her appearing in the ballroom.

She looked upon her happiness—had drifted into this—as a fixed thing, something eternal, as women ever do. . . . He knew that his happiness was a question of months, perhaps weeks. It might at any time be days . . . as long as the fever lasted. . . .

He kept a chart as to his condition:

"To-day the fever raged. To-day I was delirious for three hours. To-day I experienced moments of unconsciousness. To-day my eyes were affected:

I could see nothing but Arline: surrounding objects were dim: I am having hallucinations: I am tormented by visions of Arline lying dead. These visions put me in terror. I am confident that no man, no poet has ever described the sensations of passion. What is the purpose of love? I am convinced that it has no purpose, that like virtue it is its own reward. Love is solely for the glorification of the individual. Marriage should never intrude upon the fever of love. While in love there should be no thought of responsibilities, conditions. When Arline approached me in a white dress I had the feeling that she had visited heaven and returned as an angel. I indulged all the satisfaction of possessing an angel to love. My views of love were correct. No man could continue to exist in my condition. I am unfit for anything but love."

These were among the things he recorded.

CHAPTER XIV

For a whole week they had watched and waited for the moon to be full.

To-night it was full.

After dinner, standing in the centre of the broad white road that swept by the front of the hotel, Arline had calculated as to just when it would reach and pour in one of the windows to the little sitting-room of her corner suite, declaring, very merrily, that they would sit perfectly still on her divan, that rested beneath this very window, and take a moonlight bath.

And as luck would have it no shadow of a cloud—something that Arline had feared—had dared come between her and her carefully considered and carried out plan.

Having pulled the divan out a bit, they were seated upon it with their backs to the dainty little parlour which Arline kept filled to overflowing with flowers, taking, in rapt silence, this very moonlight bath.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she asked finally, half reluctantly breaking the silence.

"You are!"

There was a certain impatience in his voice that she knew only too well, and ignored, as women will when somewhat overloved. He wanted only her for his pastime. She wanted him and the whole world. Her love was more patient, more intense, perhaps; his ever impatient, more direct.

"Look what a stage setting," she said, "see that clump of trees," and she pointed, "way over there, and those roses in the circle of the lawn. To-day they were white and scarlet; now they are quite black. Isn't it strange how moonlight makes things so black. The trees are all black, too! Do you know why?"

"No! Do you know why it makes you so intensely white?"

"No. And my dress, too! It's like snow, isn't it?"

"I think I love you more in the moonlight!"

"Do you?" I was thinking yesterday that I love you most out-of-doors in the bright sunshine!"

"Were you? You told me you were very tired last night."

"I was. We tramped very far in the hot sun to reach those pines. But it was worth it. Didn't they smell sweet? That smell of pines has a strange effect upon me. It's a part of my childhood. I slept so beautifully last night, just like a child! Not even a dream!"

"You must sleep even sweeter to-night. Do you like to be tired, and then rest like that?"

"Yes. But not to-night! Stay as late," and she laughed, "as proprieties admit! Stay until my clock begins to strike twelve. Do you know whenever you leave me it is as though you had died! I suffer terribly, from fear it seems to me!"

"Fear?"

"Yes! You will think this very silly. Fear that I may never see you again, that something, I haven't the faintest idea," and she again laughed, "what, might happen to part us!"

"While I love you I can control all things that could part us!"

"While you love me?"

"Yes, I always tell you that!"

"I know," she took up one of his hands, "but even that can't affect my happiness. Nothing can! You see, oh, my love, I am so madly, *wildly* happy in your love! Look at me! It isn't the moonlight that makes me so white—it's my love! Why, I feel that I am shining, that there is a silvery glamour upon me just like that upon the moon! Look at me!" She repeated and stood up. "Can't you see it, that I am shining? It's my love!"

She bent over, laid her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Just think!" she exclaimed, straightening up and opening her arms, "I am the happiest being in the whole world to-night. I have forgotten everyone but you and me—everything except that I am yours! That happiest being in the world is yours! Yours to love, to forsake, abandon, do anything you will with! Isn't that wonderful!"

She took her seat on his knee. "Fold me in your arms! Give me your lips! No, no!" And she lifted a finger, "do not kiss me! Be very careful now, and very gentle: just press your lips to mine!" . . .

"Isn't it true, dear," she exclaimed at length, "that I am shining! And oh! aren't I beautiful! I feel that I am! Come quick!"

She took one of his hands, pulled him up and dragged him half laughing before a full-length mirror.

But as she saw them imaged there, her laughter ceased and the frown he loved, that strange contraction of the brows that never failed to excite him, took the place of smiles.

"It isn't I," she said turning and laying her hands on his shoulders, "who am beautiful, but you! It is you who shed the light. Whatever I am, or feel, is you, you—you!"

"Arline, my own, don't make me more frantic for you than I am. Do you remember the many things you have said to me of Wagner's music? Mad things I have not always understood? I do now. You are the whole of Wagner's music! You are more. You are all the music of the world, and I am the master musician performing you! What you have had, and will have, dear one, while my love for you lasts," this he repeated to her like a dirge, "is the accumulated demand of your temperament that has resolved into music for me to bring forth."

"Oh! why should I have all this—have you?" she asked, tossing back her head.

"You have willed it all your life!"

He took her face in his hands and kissed her. . . .

CHAPTER XV

"SHALL we dine inside or on the balcony?" he asked her the next late afternoon as they approached the hotel after one of their tramps to some new spot of beauty.

She wore a white skirt, rather short, canvas shoes, and a deep but bright blue sweater. On her head was a pretty sports hat of mauve felt, and she looked, with her flushed cheeks and bright eyes, very lovely and girlish.

"Outside," she said, "we'll get a corner and I won't have to dress. Who was the letter from that the boy handed you as we started out this afternoon?"

"You have waited all this time to ask?" and he smiled at her a bit mischievously.

"Yes." She paused in the road. "I was afraid to ask. I knew! It was from your father! Do you know," she laid a hand on his arm, "when those letters come from him I always know, and I die a thousand deaths! I always feel that some day they will prevail, that *he* will prevail! Oh! I know his standpoint, what he thinks! But, darling, you will never listen to him, will you? You will do just as I did when I came away with you to this place. You'll just throw everything ever and always to the winds for me, won't you?"

"I am throwing everything to the

winds now!" he answered her with a laugh. "If you're not going to dress let's walk over to the lake. I want you to get in the boat with me. I'll show you something."

He took her hand and pulled her along quite rapidly, with a certain eagerness, to their destination.

When he had her in the boat and they were drifting along with the tide toward a deeply crimson afterglow of the sunset he took the letter from his pocket.

"Now, look," he said, and without breaking the seal he tore the letter in two and cast the pieces on the waters.

"Ah!" she exclaimed nervously. "You shouldn't have done that!"

And she reached out for the pieces.

But with a laugh he rowed the boat merrily away.

"That's how I love you," he said finally as he rested the oars. "Nothing in the world, at present, means anything to me but you!"

"Still," she said wistfully, "we mustn't entirely forget others. I'm *afraid* of being utterly selfish!" And tears came to her eyes.

"You are so infinitely sweet, Arline," he said, bending forward to drink in her tears as he would have bent forward to catch a better sight of a smile on her lips.

In spite of Arline's expressed and genuine concern for others the incident, a bit tragic, a bit trashy, but nevertheless genuine homage, had its effect upon her. It made her happy. It told her so much more plainly than could any spoken word that her hour of conquest was at its zenith. Her sense of self-appreciation expanded. He had made her feel all the wonder of herself, and while this knowledge made her half timid, it made her also half sublime. Not only did *he* feel the effect of the effect upon *her*, but he was lifted to a seventh heaven, as it were, by his complete abandonment, an emotion, that he had looked forward to. It registered for them both one of those hours destined to stand out when even more intense ones have faded.

When they were approaching the hotel, again through twilight that had brought forth a few stars, they met a bent old woman with a big basket of roses. She was a familiar figure of the neighbourhood, had been selling flowers to summer strangers some said for fifty years.

"Old Marthe is getting home pretty late to-night, isn't she?" asked Arline, laughingly.

"Yes, and she doesn't seem to have had a very successful day. Let's buy all her flowers. We'll have that same wine of the other evening when I had to reprimand you so severely for tossing her roses all over the table and decorating yourself in them in a public dining-room."

"I did completely forget myself, didn't I?" she asked with a laugh. "I forgot there was anyone in the whole world but you and me!"

"And I'll never forget how beautiful you looked!" he returned, as he beckoned to old Marthe.

"Just think," said Arline when they were on their way laden down with the roses, "that dear old soul has been living here where she could see all the sunsets, and the stars come out, all her life. Together with her association with flowers she must have had many beautiful thoughts. Don't you think so?" she added, giving him one of the quick glances he loved.

"I think we have had more beautiful thoughts in our two short months here than old Marthe if she had been here a thousand years!"

"I reckon so, too!" granted Arline, in her Southern way.

When they were seated in the corner where roses grew on a trellis, and Arline had decorated the table, and with her hat removed, decorated herself, she looked at him and laughed merrily.

"I think," she said, "they all hate us for being so happy!"

"I don't doubt it!" he answered.

"Isn't it wonderful that we *are* so happy, that two people, who have been wicked, who have deserted friends,

and thrown over every obligation on earth can be so happy?"

"Love can transpose anything into a joy, even selfishness—since you persist that we are selfish!"

"Of course we are! It's that I think sometimes that gives it the tang. We're two awfully wicked people, dear!"

"Terribly! And shall I tell you something? Whatever we are is all through you! It's all the accumulated love of your nature taking form! All those secrets of your nature responding."

"You really think that?"

"I do! Your present, our present, is but the realization of your unspoken but persistent and never ceasing demand for love, and more love! That is the kind of terrible woman that you are! The moment I saw you—"

"No," and she put out her hands, a vision above flowers, backed by flowers, and with flowers in her hair and on her breast, "don't put it all on me, *please* don't!" She looked at him, her face lit by a vague wonder.

"Why *should* I have you thus?" she then breathed.

"Because, as I just told you, your life and the whole of you willed it!"

"It makes me afraid!"

"It is done!"

"When I think," she pondered, "that for me you gave up great wealth!"

"So did you for me!" he smiled.

"And how we wronged those two!"

"That had to be! They were the bridges your dreams had built for us to cross over and meet!"

"I hope they are not suffering."

"I have every reason to believe that they are quite consoled!"

"Why?"

"Because I saw by the evening paper that they are both married!"

"Married!"

"Yes, both of them!"

She had turned quite pale, but she now broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"Then we haven't," she said, "got one single thing in the world to worry about! Oh! I am so glad!"

CHAPTER XVI

A WEEK of rains and storms robbed their world of roses.

The bushes in yards looked quite bereft and the rambler clinging to houses was no longer a flame.

The grain of the field had ripened to gold, and wild flowers were springing up in quite a riotous way everywhere.

All of which things told that August was well on.

CHAPTER XVII

"IT has been so sweet to-day, hasn't it?" asked Arline, "warm and tropical! Don't you think the solitary green trees standing in the harvest fields like sentinels are very beautiful?"

"Yes, I do!"

They were occupying two large rockers on one of the verandas.

"Isn't it dark to-night?"

"Yes, but the harvest moon will soon appear over that mountain."

"I know! I hope it will be gold-coloured like last night!"

"It's been so warm all day, I think it will."

"I've had such a queer feeling recently."

"Have you? What?"

"As though I no longer had any home; as though I had died; as though we had both died and reached a new world! I feel absolutely detached, not a part of anything at all but you!"

"That is all I want you to feel a part of!"

"Take last night for instance, when you wouldn't let me speak to those two men that poor woman would present to me! I resented it for a moment, your forcing me to be impolite, but for a moment only. Afterwards I was quite happy over it, foolishly, of course. It was the first time that anything had ever come up to show me that you were in the position to

command me. It was the first time I ever had to obey you! I enjoyed being dominated by you, and I enjoyed to-day when you made me lower my eyes when they passed us in the road."

"I won't have other men talking to you!"

"I reckon they know it pretty well. You don't think I cared to talk to them? I didn't. Only it seemed strange at first to be impolite, that was all."

"And you are still worrying over it?" his eyes flashed.

"Of course not! I don't care in the least. I care for nothing on earth, or that has ever been on this earth for me, but you, and I want to obey because you love me. Every time I have thought of it, to-day, it was as though I felt your thumbs pressing on my shoulders and the pain hurt a little. It was a new sensation of bliss. I have been happier to-day! Everything has seemed more beautiful. Obedience makes one feel gentler. The day, too, has been gentle, scarcely a breath of wind from any quarter. It has all been summer, summer, summer! I felt summer and smelt summer, and summer seemed to touch me and be a part of me. Doesn't it seem impossible, dearest, as we sit here, that rough winds can ever blow again and ravaging storms come to destroy this wondrous peace. Just now, this moment, my love is like this day: so sweet, so gentle, so peaceful. Oh! I wonder if a storm will ever come that will destroy me. Do you know," she asked, facing him and looking him into his eyes, "how much I love you?"

"Yes."

"But *to-day*, do you know how much I have loved you to-day? Oh! it is so divinely sweet to love you so! Even in my dreams I never believed that love could be like this—as *we* have known it! Nor did I have any idea that the world was so beautiful. Love is the spectacles that God puts on us to let us see how really beautiful everything is. They say that love is blind. Why, I never saw at all until I loved! Now I don't miss seeing the tiniest blade of grass, or the littlest infinitesimal flower. And every hour I watch the sky, the blue of it, the clouds, and the stars and the moon, and all the shadows the moonlight makes, all the great wonders and a thousand little things—*all* the wonders! And when your arms are about me I see all the wonders of the world, as it were, under a strong coloured light. I seem to be seeing with your eyes as you see things! I am so curious at times to know how you *do* see things, how everything looks to you, looks as seen through your eyes. I'm jealous," she half laughed, "of your seeing things I can't know about, and of your thoughts —so many of them, of course—that I never know. Sometimes I think it would be better if I could just close my eyes and while filled with the strange subtle joy of your presence let my spirit escape to heaven! Do you remember the close of the Wandering Jew, how the lovers took poison and died in the very ecstasy of a final moment of love? That was a great conception, I think."

"Those men are coming this way—don't look at them!"

She bent her head quickly and lowered her eyes.

"It makes my heart beat," she whispered.

She heard the footsteps on the gravelled path and felt her lover's eyes sharply upon her.

"They have gone," he said at last, and she raised her head like a child.

She was very lovely, sitting there so humble and undefiant in the shadow of night. There was a relaxation in her attitude, the relaxation of one who has feasted upon joys but who knows that richer ones await.

For every day in the lives of these two was the birth of new ecstasies. The man was wise in making her subservient to himself alone, for he knew well that the very thought currents of the outer world would jar the strings of his instrument. She was in very truth the instrument he had likened her

to, and he the master performer he had declared himself. Her voice, and all she said, were but the melodies provoked by him, and he listened enchanted by what he provoked.

"To-night it is just as though we really were in Paradise, isn't it?" she asked, and then went on speaking, low and intensely:

"There seems such a wonder upon everything. I have had such a starved life, been so soul blind and hungry, that suddenly to see and always be feasting is so marvellous. And, then, never to be lonely, I who have been lonely all my life until I met you! It is truly as if I had died and been born again in Paradise. I am always busy with my joy, and yet there is so much rest, so much gentle rest, that reminds me of my childhood. All the mistakes of my nature, all my sorrows, seem to have passed away! It is as though life were a tepid bath of clear, perfumed water in which I float, and float, and float, and where above me the very heavens seem to open and show me visions. But always with you as the central figure! You are sure, my darling, you love me this way too, that you *still* do?"

She laid her hand on his arm. "I want to tell you something! When we first came here I felt that your love outstripped mine. That it was something that I could never reach up to, never be a match for. But now, since my love has grown so steadily, I believe that I love you more than you do me!"

"That is woman's love—it grows, keeps on."

"Of course! You want it that way, don't you?"

He was silent, with his eyes fixed on the moon, coming up, as Arline had hoped, the colour of gold, over the mountain.

"You do, don't you?" she persisted. He turned, took her face in his hands and kissed her.

For some reason tears gushed to her eyes and when he released her she put her face down in her hands and cried.

"What is it?" he asked, leaning to her.

"I don't know," she looked at him through her tears, "but I am sorry that this particular day is over!"

"It only means," he whispered, "that another night has come! Look!" And he pointed to the moon.

"How beautiful it is! But then everything has been unusually beautiful to-day. To-night I don't believe *anything* could be ugly. Do you know, as I look on this scene in front of us, see it grow brighter, I don't believe I will ever again care for the world, the big cities, I mean, and all that goes on in them. Compared to our existence here, surrounded by Nature and all her wonders, man's world seems only a cruel tyrant mocking one with false splendour. I see its beauty as a decoy, a sham. I now look upon it critically as upon the face of a lover who has betrayed my trust. In that face I still see beauty and the power that lured me, but in my gaze is indifference. This existence, and one day spent with you, is worth more than ten thousand years spent among myriads of people in the gayest capitals of the world! Oh! I wish," she burst forth, after a pause, "just for this night only everybody in the entire world could be as happy as I am!"

He took her hand very gently and held it.

CHAPTER XVIII

Two weeks slipped away.

Most of the crops in the surrounding country had been garnered.

The harvest moon would not be back for another year.

If a brisk wind blew, as had happened quite frequently of late, leaves fell in showers from the trees. Nor were the wild flowers so radiant. Some had vanished; some were pale and withered. And the fields had also changed. Ruthlessly shorn of their yield, their gold, they looked a bit forlorn, on certain days desolate.

The hotel, too, was rather barren of aspect. Guests were leaving daily. Trunks were in evidence, sometimes on

the outsides of doors, sometimes being carried down the steps so that persons had to wait or step aside. . . . One looked after the wagons that carted them off as though they proclaimed in their noisy way the end of things. . . .

CHAPTER XIX

"But how could you tell me in front of those people to go to my room! How could you! How could you!" Arline burst forth.

"How did you dare to talk to those men in my absence!"

"How *can* I be insulting!"

"Because I told you to be insulting to any man who attempted to speak to you!"

In his jealous rage he was like a young sapling wrapped in flashes of lightning.

He had caught her, during a momentary absence on his part, in conversation with the two men who had been somewhat persistent in their effort to engage her attention. Completely oblivious, he had ordered her off the porch to her room.

Staggered and baffled, she had fled the situation at once, and they were now facing each other in the little parlour that had been the seat of so many passionate dreams.

Upon Arline, a slave to the proprieties, the good behaviour of life, his act had come like a thunderbolt. For the moment it revolutionized her entire attitude towards him. He had completely outraged her sense of decency, and she was staggered into a frame of mind as unnatural to her as his deportment had, in her opinion, been to him. Combined with her resentment, however, was a sense of helplessness, a knowledge that what she was saying and doing in the moment was acting, that any real power to resent, to protect herself against such deportment on his part, was lost in her love for him.

With her eyes, against her will, losing their blaze and becoming humid as they remained fixed on his face, a face still transfigured by anger, but by no means on account of this robbed of its charm, she sensed that she was letting go, that she was the victim of a power over her too tremendous to become defined.

Suddenly she was overcome by this. Her knees felt weak; she wanted to fall down at his feet, press her forehead to them and burst into tears. With this thought the tears did come and her lips quivered. But she made another effort to hold her ground, repeating half vaguely, half stupidly:

"How did you dare!"

For answer he took a telegram from his pocket, extracted it from the envelope, opened it, and handed it to her.

She read it and then stared blankly at him.

"Well?" she gasped.

That came three days ago. It has not been answered. That is how I shut everything out of my life for you! That is how I have let nothing come between you and me! And you dare to question my right to bid you be off when a couple of blackguards are bent upon making love to you. Don't you suppose I know men?"

"How is your sister?"

"Dead! I heard this morning!"

"But this—"

"Never mind what it is! What of *you*, with your vanity, your desire to charm any reprobate who happens to come along? Haven't I seen you casting your eyes around for homage! That's the woman of you! You haven't been able to resist!"

"That isn't so! You know it! I haven't seen any one but you. You're unjust. You know it perfectly well! But that isn't the point. When you got that telegram that your sister was dying you should have gone."

"I shouldn't! I should have remained with you! Hadn't I sworn to you that while my love for you lasted *nothing* could take me from you! When that telegram came it proved to me that nothing could, not even death. But now it's different. Anything can take

me. I don't care where I go, or what I do! I'm going to leave you!"

If she had a moment before been only too conscious of acting, now he was. He knew, believed, had ever believed, that the time would come when he would leave her, when his love for her would end as mysteriously as it began, when he would be recovered from love and go his way, but he knew also, that that time was not now. What had really happened, through the sudden flaring up of jealousy, had made his passion for her burn even more fiercely, so fiercely that for the moment it was hate. He had the impulse to insult her, give her pain, destroy her. Her act, and his injustice towards her concerning it, had placed both himself and her on a lower plane.

Later—even now vaguely—he recognized this as a sign, the first step towards his recovery, recognized it through distinct shock, that he had stepped down from the pedestal of adoration. His consideration of her was for the first time lost in a blinding passion, a desire for her not inspired by reverential adoration, but through the consciousness of her appeal to other men before whom, according to his present frame of mind, she had bared the charms that, while exclusively his, he had held sacred.

As this thought became clear it took possession of him. The blood rushed to his face and he strode to the door.

"I'm going to leave you," he flung at her, turning abruptly to face her charged from head to foot by the venom of his anger, "I'm going down and devote myself to other women! I'm going to insult you as you have me! I'm going to do something to be even with you—and then I'm going to leave you!"

She swept past him to the door and with her back to it barricaded it with arms.

"You're not!" she exclaimed, white as a sheet.

"If you do," she paused breathless, her eyes flashing, "if you do," she repeated, "I'll kill myself! You'll be my murderer!"

Arline's beauty was not at its height in this moment. Her countenance was blighted, transfigured by fear. The terror of the idea of the loss of him, that loss that her subconscious self had ever recognized as a future possibility—his words had emphasized it—now attacked her conscious self. It completely overwhelmed her. It caused her to reach out.

Staggered and bewildered, scarcely knowing it she descended from *her* pedestal—she fell. . . . She fell inasmuch as for the first time she resorted to emotional appeal. As the perishing of thirst drink of the salt waters, she attempted to hold her own, hold him through that appeal. It was all new to her. She was the novice, the frightened prima donna offering her song through a baked, aching throat. However, her stage fright quickly passed, and she was bathed in the delirium of her purpose, her purpose to hold, as it were, her audience, to chain him into helpless surrender.

Her breast heaved artificially, her eyes closed but to open and gleam, to give back the reflection of his lower nature that his brutality had caused to settle there. As she had held him by her sweetness, her naturalness, her simplicity, the divine, one might say sublime, purity of her mind and soul, she now called to her aid all those baser things that she knew nothing of, but had heard of, and read, and seen enacted on the stage.

She became the enchantress, the temptress.

He saw all this, saw her fall and in the full consciousness of his power laughed in her face.

After that they stood a moment, their feelings running riot in their veins, gazing cynically, full of hate, into each other's eyes.

Then with his beauty as damaged as hers he went up to her, pressed her head roughly to the back of the door, laughed above her lips, and then kissed them.

For the second time she saw his eyes bloodshot.

"You're going to obey me, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes," she stammered, attempting to nod the head he had again with one hand pressed to the door, "I'm going to obey you!"

As he left the room he did not know how to define his emotions, whether it was disgust or a sense of liberation that gave him such an elastic step. . . .

CHAPTER XX

WITH September there was quite an advent of horseback riders.

The arrival of one particular girl had created something of a stir.

The reason was very simple. She was a remarkably beautiful girl, knew it, and used her knowledge boldly.

She made no bones of the fact that she was summering unchaperoned, and in a not over musical voice expressed convincingly the platitudes of the hour concerning her sex. She thought skirts quite a part of a past era, and appeared, for the better part of her time, in the riding clothes.

Occasionally in the evening she wore striking costumes that exposed extraordinarily lovely shoulders and arms, and this contrast to her usual boyish appearance centred upon her comment and admiration. She became, in fact, the object of women's jealousy and men's protection, the protection of the male who scents game.

From the day of her arrival Arline was afraid of her. It took only a short while for this fear to develop into actual terror.

Apparently perfectly normal relations had been restored between her and Winston, but there was an undercurrent of unrest, an undercurrent that she felt instinctively held the dangers of the undertow of the sea. She was conscious of an effort to please such as she had not experienced, even thought of, before the angry scene between them.

She observed herself critically, as she had not done, after making her toilette, and went over her wardrobe observant of creases or anything showing the effect of the sun or of wear. She ordered several things, was eager until they came, and dissatisfied afterwards. Clothes had to be broken in, had to, at any rate with her, become a part of the wearer, show the wearer through them, and she seemed not to have time for this. She constantly felt hurried, awoke in the mornings with a quick glance at her watch, always fearing she had overslept, and wondering where he was, what he was doing.

One morning he breakfasted before she came down and the incident, apparently a simple one, had made her ill the entire day, ill and with a feeling that she was a bit heavy, not attractive. That this was only a condition of mind for which there was no foundation never once occurred to her. In reality her self-confidence, that inner sense of triumph that a woman feels when her lover's passion for her is at its height, was on the wane. She was nervous, timid, infinitely sweet, and pathetic. Only when he was given over to expressions of love was she at ease, sufficiently at ease to forget herself, and even then her mind was troubled. He had to kiss away tears that sprung to her eyes at a word from him or a caress.

And this girl, this gay, insolent, lighthearted girl with whom she had nothing whatever to do, became a thorn in her side.

If she appeared suddenly, and more especially if she approached within fair eye reach of Winston, her heart would beat furiously, and her eyes, in spite of her effort to control this, would become fiery challenges of hatred. When all unconsciously the girl would pass on her way, she would study her lover's face. On one occasion when she happened to pass them in a sweeping gallop, with her beautiful face and throat bared to the wind, Arline lost her breath. If men, as they often did, formed a group about her, she regarded her as a personal enemy come to destroy her. If in Arline's eyes the girl, with her boldness, her over-pronounced up-to-dateness, her openly ex-

pressed deference to feminine liberation, her ignorance of politeness, manner, gentility, appeared vulgar, she felt the utter helplessness of making any man, even Winston, see this.

What they would see, all that they, or so thought Arline, *could* see, was a beautiful girl.

Had not Winston smiled at her openly smoking cigarettes on the veranda, and the manner she had of slashing at her polished boot while she chatted in a husky, to Arline surely unladylike, voice with the men.

She asked Winston, went so far, if a certain raucous note in the girl's voice did not strike him as rather coarse, underbred.

His careless answer that he had not noticed this, had not noticed what it seemed to her that he, with his sensitiveness, could not help but notice, had sealed her lips.

If the truth be told, what Winston's sensitiveness had responded to was the really unusual beauty of the girl.

Also, he was perhaps amused by her gay, careless manner, her utter disregard of public opinion, and, above all, that she could so charmingly affect the appearance of an effeminate boy. She had arrived among them as a diversion, certainly a diversion for the eye.

It was this that his own eyes plainly, too plainly, told Arline.

One day a little incident occurred that emphasized her dread of the girl's charm—charm for men, and by men Arline meant one man, Stanley Winston.

It happened, the morning being clear and beautiful, that she and Winston were among quite a number loitering after breakfast upon the veranda.

The girl, dressed for her morning ride, was also loitering—loitering cleverly, since she so easily centred attention upon herself. With her riding cap tilted back, and a cigarette between her lips or finger and thumb, she was certainly, as seen through Arline's jealous eyes, more captivating, more wholly irresistible than she had ever seen her.

As usual the girl's horse, a beautiful, sensitive animal, with a white star in his forehead and wide-open pink nostrils, was tied in front of the hotel, awaiting her impulse to mount. Evidently anxious to be off with his beautiful rider on his back, he whinnied several times and then began to paw the turf.

Several times in her rather raucous voice his mistress chided, commanded even, that he await her presence more decorously. To this the horse, so evidently on this glorious morning feeling his own oats, failed to respond. He went on whinnying and pawing the ground.

Suddenly manifesting her displeasure by the cut of her eye and a firm planting of her lips, his mistress walked somewhat calmly out, and in the presence of the audience assembled on the veranda chastised the beast unmercifully.

When she returned with flushed face and eyes shining, returned, in fact, more beautiful than ever, what Arline saw registered on her lover's face was not what she had hoped for, disgust of the girl's act, her barbarous cruelty, but admiration of the girl herself.

Whether or not the girl caught the glance in her behalf she came straight forward and with her boyish manner swung herself to a seat on the rail directly in front of him.

"When I speak to a horse," she said directly at Winston as she flirted a snowy handkerchief from the cuff of her sleeve and wiped a brow of which Venus herself—to say nothing of Arline—might have felt jealous, "he has to obey!"

"Does that," asked Winston carelessly, "also apply to men?"

"Does it?" she asked, replacing her handkerchief and bringing forth from some secret pocket her cigarette case.

"Have one?" she asked of Arline.

"Thank you, no," stammered Arline, "I don't smoke."

"No? Why not?"

"Why," said Arline with an inflection of disapproval, "I never have."

"You don't know what you miss!"

laughed the girl as she bent forward with the cigarette between her scarlet lips to take a light from the match Winston had politely struck for her.

Having taken a whiff or two, she centred upon Winston her clear, lake-like eyes, shining like early daylight beneath her level, perfect brows.

"Don't you ride?" she asked.

"I do, yes," answered Winston.

"Then why don't you come along some time? We're getting up a party for a sunrise start. Won't you go?"

"Why, I might, yes," returned Winston with a light laugh, the kind of laugh to fascinate its hearer.

"See that you do," she laughed back.

And tossing her half-smoked cigarette over the rail, strode off for her mount.

As she dashed by, waving her whip at Winston, he did that which cuts deepest at the heart of a woman, a woman like Arline, who loves. . . . He gave her an insolent, mischievous smile as he blew her a kiss.

Arline sat for quite a while speechless. To refer to his act would be to bring down on her head that what he had done, he could explain it thus, was getting even with her for what Arline distinctly felt she had not done. Something told her that he would resort to this, that his nature was not as big as hers, that he was, or might be, capable of a trick. It not only rendered her helpless—it hurt!

In this particular moment Arline would have given her life to feel able to trust to her lover's nobility. . . . But she did not feel this, did not feel that she had, or might have, this to cling to.

"You are not going?" she asked, laying a hand on his arm.

"Of course not!" he returned indifferently, yet with a peevish note.

Arline heard the peevish note and looked ahead of her as into an abyss.

A male bird with a worm in its beak swooped down to its nest built in the eaves of the porch just above her head.

She thought the twittering of the birds would make her scream.

"What shall we do to-day?" asked Winston, finally breaking the silence.

"We didn't," said Arline, failing to control the reproach, "use to have to ask. Every hour seemed to offer something!"

"That is true, but we've about exhausted the place. If we can't think of anything you would like especially to do I am going fishing with the kids this afternoon." He eyed her closely as he spoke.

"You're going to leave me for a whole afternoon?"

"Yes," and he became playful, "I want to see how much you will miss me, how glad you will be to see me when I get back."

And he expressed his tenderness in a new way, a way that stung her like the cut of a whip. He pinched her cheek.

She sprang up and clapped a hand to her mouth.

"What is it?" he asked, noting the wildness of her eyes and her extreme pallor.

"Two months ago—two weeks ago—you wouldn't have left me!"

"You are quite right, Arline. I was thinking of that very thing when I agreed to go with the kiddies. Let us hope my delirium is abating. Let us hope that from now on I will be able to love you more sanely."

She fled from him and later when he followed her looking extremely interesting in a fishing costume he had managed to effect out of his wardrobe, he found her face downwards on the divan of her little parlour sobbing.

It pleased him to tease her, laugh at her. Finally he kissed her tears away and charmed by a new aspect of him, charmed by him in the coarse brown linen shirt that left his throat exposed, the belt, the boots, and all, she entered into a wonderfully happy hour with him.

Outside her door he felt relieved and quite eager about the fishing trip.

Returning home at eventide a certain reluctance filled him, reluctance as

to the dressing hour, the lights in the dining-room, many things.

As his mind strayed to his home he paused in the road with a start.

"I am convalescing," he said aloud, "the fever is abating."

CHAPTER XXI

HORSES, as well as people, are sometimes revengeful. At any rate, or so it would seem, the one ridden by the beautiful girl was.

This conclusion is derived from the fact that from the moment the hotel was lost to view he became, apparently, bent upon vengeance. His foreflank no doubt continued to quiver from pain. The touch of the whip upon this same gleaming foreflank and he was immediately on his hind legs. The spur that followed dashed him forward, plain to any observer, a runaway horse.

The power of a horse that has broken aloof from the control of a pair of small human hands, the power of a horse no longer allowing itself to be thus controlled, is one of the most terrible things in the world. Nothing else so definitely expresses power and brute force.

All this the young girl—her beautiful face grown whiter than marble—was quite conscious of. She, however, by no means abandoned her effort to subdue the animal. They flew, both bent upon victory, down the white state road that cut the green fields like a pallid frozen stream in blinding sunlight. A man, a ploughman, seeing the situation, himself grown pale, leaped the fence to her rescue. His reward was her whip across his face.

No horse—her action said plainer than words—had ever got the better of her. Her blazing eyes and the strained muscles of her bared throat emphasized this.

In five more minutes she was dashed against a tree and killed instantly.

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT shocked Arline was not so much the tragic death of the girl as the effect upon her.

She saw her brought to the hotel on the rude improvised stretcher looking like a dead soldier boy; saw the change in people's faces; experienced the general hush of things, and not one feeling of pity stirred her heart.

She was glad the girl was dead!

Other feelings might follow, all the horror of such a thing, such a bewildering catastrophe, all the other normal emotions, especially normal to her, might come, but her first feeling, her first emotion, was relief that the girl was dead, out of the way—out of his way, out of his sight, that his eyes could no longer rest upon her, follow her.

There was something very terrible in this to Arline, whose nature was all tenderness, all sympathy, all fine, in fact. It set her thinking. How she had been led on by her love until now she had experienced, deliberately experienced, coldly and composedly, relief at the sudden and unusually tragic death of a young girl who had done her no harm, whose only offence, affront, was her beauty.

But had the girl done her no harm? As she passed her room, passed it quickly with hurried step and swift glance through the half open door at the dead girl, no longer in appearance a debonair insolent boy, but a recumbent young virgin in a white dress, Arline pondered eagerly upon this.

Had this girl, now so helpless, now so completely out of her way, had she done her no harm? She almost laughed. Why even her death may have fixed—brought out the harm—all the deadly purpose of her. For would it not centre upon her thoughts, his thoughts, that perhaps in life, in the carelessness of a careless life, might have failed to become actually formed and so actually fixed.

While in her room, engaged in a

change of toilet, she was quite given over to these thoughts. When she left it to pass down the long hall, where the bustle and laughter behind doors that opened upon it had become stilled, she saw Winston, the only presence in the room at the moment, standing beside the bed, looking upon the face of the beautiful, dead girl, now, since her passing by of a few moments before, somewhat fantastically strewn in white flowers and glistening green.

Arline had a wild thought.

"I could kill!" she breathed between closed lips.

And then she almost laughed aloud. What she could kill already lay dead!

"He no longer loves me," she repeated over and over as she descended the stairs, weak and faint, holding to the banisters. "I am nothing to him."

And Arline, white as the dead girl herself, realized suddenly that she was jealous of the dead!

This rather confused her. For a while she was horrified by, at, herself, but just why, how, or for what, escaped her.

The long porch was filled with people, all changed, all with different countenances from the early morning, discussing the girl. No one was actually grieved. No one, as a matter of fact, perhaps really cared. But dead, out of the way, she had the attention of all. Every single soul was thinking of her, discussing her, or attempting to dismiss her lightly.

The bar was kept busy. Boys were running about with trays of drinks. Arline had another thought that shocked her, brought her to her senses. She hated the girl for dying so tragically, and so, as it were, exclusively, claiming a—for so it seemed—fête day in her honour.

And then Arline went to an extreme corner of the porch and stood with her hands pressed to the railing looking out with all her old sweetness returned.

"If *he* were not here," she murmured, "if he were not in my life, how all this would have affected me! Why," and real tears flowed, "it would have broken my heart. I would have been the one to be of use."

Winston found her thus.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was a week later that Arline and Winston were seated, as once before, in front of her window with their backs to the room looking out on the moonlit scene.

There was a difference. The window was closed. They saw the beautiful scene through glass and Arline was enfolded in a white velvet wrap that had ermine about the neck and sleeves, a thing she had over and over been to theatres in. She looked a bit changed, a bit cold and austere, cold and austere as the moonlit scene itself as seen through glass. One special tree had, as though attacked by a blight, lost all its leaves. Bereft of them, bare and chill looking, it stood among its fellows now so busy gathering gorgeous tints for the autumn festival.

Arline had her eyes on that tree. It seemed to her they were kindred souls.

During the past week she had not seen very much of Winston, had not, that is, seen him at all intimately.

They had been together it was true. They had done the usual things, even wined a good deal to keep things going between them, keep up the emotional pace of their existence. And everything, or so Arline felt, believed, had been a failure. Her effort at charm, sympathetic appeal, gaiety, her natural boldness, her forced laughter, her despondency, her tears, gentle or wild, had all been like the manœuvres of an actress rehearsing to an empty theatre.

"Arline!"

"Yes." The breaking of a painful silence, a long painful silence, excited her so that she nervously took up one of his hands.

"Yes," she repeated.

"All that you have been saying of late is quite true."

"That you have ceased to love me?"

She kept her eyes, where she had quickly turned them, on the window.

"No, not that; I will always love you. The sweetness of you, your charm, your loveliness, will always be with me, a part of my life; perhaps the one beautiful part, for no woman can ever in my eyes be like you, no woman *is* like you, half so sweet, so alluring, so perfect to love. But, and this is the strange, I might even say pathetic, part, as you led me into love, it is you who are leading me away from love. I mean that through you I have learned the delights of love, all its wondrous mystery; through you I have come to understand that I shall want the partnership of love in my daily life. I will want, I fear, many loves. Every imaginative man does. I will want perhaps —and this I learned through the girl we have discussed so frequently during the past week—inferior loves. There was no refinement about this girl, no soul, no culture, no tenderness, but, I have no doubt, and perhaps on account of these things, that she *was* the very opposite of you, I would have been, had she lived, rather desperately enamoured of her. What you said, what you reiterated so often when she first came, that she was not a lady, did not offend me—as it did you—in the least. It rather attracted! She was a relief to me from you. I wanted to leave you to be with her, go riding with her—I was terribly impatient to go riding with her. I wanted to descend from our platform. I wanted to take her for what *she* stood, what she emphasized, was here to emphasize, and which you could not see, of course, could not be expected to dream, that she was not a good girl. Her beauty, and who knows what else, had led her away from goodness. She had snapped her fingers long ago, even when she was a child, perhaps, in the face of goodness—"

"You mean—" gasped Arline.

"Yes, just that, what you think, what I all along knew. And I knew, also, on the very morning of her death, as she sat upon the rail of the veranda inviting me to be a devil, that just as I had been, was called to be a god, given over to godlike delights with you, I could very easily be a devil, given over to devilish delights!"

She turned to him a face blurred, distorted, distracted.

"You can deliberately tell me all this?" she asked helplessly.

"Yes," and he took up one of her beautiful hands, "I can deliberately tell you what a man is, what he is like. I have never deceived you, have I, my sweet one, never once, have I?"

"I deceived myself—I have *made* myself believe!" And her face was buried in her hands.

As they sat thus, the moon, full and clear, hurried into the very heart of a dark cloud. It remained buried there, leaving them, except for the dim light coming through an opaque transom, in darkness.

"Do you know why I am showing myself—revealing myself—to you, my dear?" he finally asked.

She looked at him blankly. "To hurt me?"

He smiled at her for this—his smile —and all her being melted as of old under the spell of it.

"No, not to hurt you! Man that I am, confess myself to be, I do not believe, while I might often do so, I would ever want to hurt you. It is this!"

"What?" she asked, taking his arm in her hands and gazing at him still distracted, still full of love for him, half-maddened, afraid, but clinging to her love, as it were, with her hands.

"I want you to do what a man has never, I believe, asked a woman to do!"

"What?" she asked again. "Give you up, bravely, without a murmur, just let you go?" Her voice had all the intensity of a violin being scraped upon by a madman.

"No; men have asked that of women!"

"What then? *What?*"

"I want to ask you not to leave me—" he paused, "not to leave me, but stand in the background of my life.

Arline!" His own voice was fervid. "I adore you! I always will adore you! What has occurred to me to ask you to do is so, well, perhaps, absurd is the word; I hardly know how to express it, how to put it to you. I want you to be my wife. I want you to accept truth as to marriage as nine wives out of ten accept lying."

"What do you mean?" asked Arline, the radiance of a hope lighting her features, for a cry had rung in her ears, out her soul, that she would take him on any condition.

"I mean, that having fallen to love, having tested as I told you all its delights, all the ecstasies of its delirium, I am apt, as I just said, to have many loves, no more than most men, perhaps, but many. Through them all I want to hold on to you!"

"In what way?" breathlessly asked Arline, "how?"

"As my wife, the woman my infidelities will cause me to return to fitfully, spasmodically, when you least expect it."

She threw back her head and laughed.

"You are as mad at the end of love as you were at the beginning!" she exclaimed.

"Love is all madness. Did I deceive you as to that? It's purely a fever, my dear, an abnormal condition, a madness, all its acts prove that. At present the fever for you is over, but I believe if you took me for what I am, that if you were serenely and beautifully in the background of my life until the hour of my death, I would return to you, come to your sacred precincts to worship you, pray to you for rest, come to—"

He saw her tremble, but went on quietly:

"I was untrue to you, Arline, from the day that girl arrived; I was untrue to you in spirit because a new kind of interest—why, how can I say?—awoke in me at the sight of her. Had she lived I am sure I would have followed her and—not a difficult task—loved her. There!| Put your beautiful head close to me and let me fold you in my arms."

He took her thus, and went on in a low voice:

"I might have left you, perhaps I would have left you, but only for a while. I would have returned to you a tired man longing for the comfort of your love. That is all any wife can be to any man, Arline, no matter what they say! It is all, in fact, that any woman can be. I have loved you, the fever has passed, but you will be forever, whether by my side or separated from me, my true wife. You will be forever the angel of my dreams!"

As he spoke the last words there was flashed to him the thought that, as he had hoped, his love was dying, going out, in splendour.

It excited him, gave him satisfaction. He lifted her face to kiss her passionately, exulting that this was possible.

But she drew away from him, a look of terror in her lovely eyes.

"Don't you love me?" he asked, flashing genuine anger.

"Yes," she breathed, her head back, her pained eyes burning in his, "I love you, but—I am not big enough, I am not equal to the truth. I couldn't," her eyes closed and her lips quivered, "stand it!"

"In my opinion, Arline," he shook her a little, "you could! You are," surely his love was dying splendidly, "capable of the highest love! Do you know what that is?"

"It is what I have given you!"

"And can take away?"

She felt all the subtle injustice of his reply, felt it from head to foot, felt, too, that it was unanswerable.

So she kept silent and merely turned from him to look out upon the night.

The moon was wrestling fiercely in the black turbulent clouds. Suddenly it freed itself and shone serene and calm in her face. It carried no definite message in the moment. She was too stunned, too dazed, too agonized, but it was fixing in a wild way a memory for her.

She turned to him uneasily.

"It's such a beautiful night!" she said.

And then, without another word, as one stricken, she dropped down on her knees, put her arms about his waist, pressed her head against him, and remained thus, remained thus a long while, in silence.

When she looked up at him, into the half-boyish face, now flooded in light, the face whose charm even in the moment was like a dagger plunged to the hilt in her heart, she smiled.

"You must give me time, my darling, to think of all you have said. It's very fine to offer me the truth, I know that!"

"You believe that I love you, Arline?"

Her answer was to smile upon him again, dispassionately, pityingly, a sad, beautiful smile for herself.

A little later, when she asked him to go she still smiled, and when she found herself alone was surprised that she felt so natural, quite bright, in fact.

The moonlight was so clear that she had no difficulty in seeing objects plainly. She felt energetic, folded several of her dresses, put her shoes away, and tidied her writing table. . . . She was quite absorbed.

"I've been neglecting things terribly," she said aloud, "terribly!"

The second utterance of the word surprised her. It had a harsh, metallic sound. It was not her voice at all. She was seized by a strange queer idea that *she* was not herself. She put up her hands with her fingers all spread out and stared at them. No, they were not hers. They looked different. Everything did! She was frightened, terribly alarmed by these feelings.

Suddenly she found herself rushing down the hall to his room.

He opened to her knock in his shirt sleeves. . . . She stood staring at him.

"You must come back," she said, "come back for a moment. I believe—I believe I am dying!"

CHAPTER XXIV

In the morning she heard that he was out taking riding on the dead girl's horse.

She waited at her window, one, two, three hours for him to return. When she saw him finally, dashing up in a sweeping gallop, complete master of the animal that had killed the girl, rather showing off to the people, at any rate, forcing them to associate him with the dead girl, forcing all too naturally the joint use of their names, she called on her pride, the last thing she felt that she had to call on.

She wrote him a note and asked him to go, asked him to leave her there alone for a couple of weeks to decide about her future. She wrote him a very beautiful letter, but that was the gist of it.

It rather annoyed him to be called up, called up to a halt, with a demand upon him for sudden action. During his ride he had experienced all the delights, all the wild joy of a convalescent. And that was what he had said to himself, to the winds, to the clear blue sky, and gaudy leaves of the trees. That the fever was practically over! That he was convalescent! That he was a sick man returned to health! That he was well and ready for life's battles!

During one particular moment, while crossing a bridge with the clatter of his horse's hoofs ringing in his ears, and with a cascade of water sparkling in the distance, Arline had no significance whatever. A little later he regarded her as something wilted, drooping, one sick from an ailment of which he had recovered. He rejoiced in his flights of the evening before, rejoiced that his love, the fever had gone out, as he had hoped, so splendidly. He hardly believed—for hers was a spirited nature, even though such a gentle one—that Arline would take him at his word, that she would take her position in the background of his life.

But even if she did, even if that were the outcome, why not? All he had

said to her was quite true. Liberated, freed of obligation, he had no doubt that he would return to her. And some such idea as he had had concerning Nelly when he decided to make her his wife, that he could atone, make up to her, for whatever she had to bestow, was in the background of his head. Arline was, as he had defined to her, love itself, the quiet bubbling spring of love from which any man might care to repeatedly refresh himself. And how sweet she was! Yes, his decision was—well, certainly had its appeal.

They would live out-of-town, some suburban place, something that would just fit Arline, a bungalow, plenty of flowers, comforts, too, every comfort, and he would keep his town place as a workshop, a refuge to retire to and work. And how he would work! With Arline in the background, how he could work! It would be, that is if Arline agreed, an ideal life.

But that night, as he sped away from her on a fast train to Washington he was not so cheerful, not so hopeful.

They had said good-bye, taken their farewell embrace at the sunset hour, under an old tree that early in the summer Arline had styled *her* tree. It was she who asked to say good-bye to him there; she who had gone ahead and left word for him to follow her. It smote him to think of her as he had come upon her in a white dress, with her hands and eyes going out to him. It was her loveliness that smote him. He kept seeing her, seeing this loveliness backed by the loneliness of the early autumn evening.

His night was a restless one. He couldn't sleep. He wished that she had shed tears. But she did not. She didn't do anything very much after that first glad look when she caught sight of him and put out her hands. Her request that he leave her there, there under the tree, had been a command given with a smile. He could see that smile now, would ever see it. Had she invented its plaintiveness to torture him? . . . As long as he lived he would see it as one remembers the fragrance of a certain flower that bloomed in one's youth.

He had dined alone.

CHAPTER XXV

THE night that Winston's vision of Arline, seated desolately in the frontless arbour on Capitol Hill, came true was some six weeks later in late October.

It was rather cold, had been all day, and a fine mist was falling. There were no leaves left on the vines that covered the arbours; the seats were damp. Besides gathering her wrap closer about her, Arline seemed oblivious of these things. She had grown thinner. Her face had a permanent pallor unknown to it in former days. And the eyes that peered out as though trying to see by their own light, were a bit tired.

Arline had made a wonderful fight to, as she put it, hold on to herself. She wasn't quite sure that she had done so, and what troubled her most was that it seemed to her so often that if she could see *him*, just see him, she *could* hold on to herself. She longed so to see him, longed so intensely just to see him! After all it was she who had robbed herself of her privilege.

There were moments when it seemed to Arline that he had been very generous about the whole thing. In those moments she wanted to kiss his hands. What strength that would be to her—just to hold his hands and kiss them! It seemed to her if she could do that she would feel tremendously strong, equal to anything. Her lips would quiver very piteously at these times and she—she had learned to call it that—would indulge herself in tears. It seemed to Arline she didn't cry like other women, didn't cry as she had expected after he went away she would. She had only to stand still, clasp her hands, and the tears would roll down her cheeks.

As she sat there, she was thinking about this quite seriously, as though it were a subject of tremendous impor-

tance. Finally, she put out her hands, in an aimless way, to see if it was still misting. It was not, and this seemed to comfort her, give her the privilege of remaining longer, as long as she willed. She thought of the old man who had occupied a distant corner on the night when she and Winston were seated in this very spot, the old man who had made her restless and walked off so sadly. Where was he, the poor old soul, this night, this hour? May be dead, she flung out in a thought that dismissed him.

Casting her glance towards the sky she was surprised to find the moon there, a full moon hidden behind a dense bank of clouds, but shining steadily. Suddenly, just as on that night in the mountains, it began to wrestle with the clouds, began a fierce struggle to free itself and shine.

Arline watched this battle with keen and absorbing interest.

"You will never do it!" she said aloud, with a strange little laugh. "They are too much for you, my dear."

The moon, so embedded in clouds, and making such a desperate struggle to get out and shine, became almost in her mind, Arline herself. She watched all its manœuvres with just that kind of interest. If the moon won—if it did come out of all those clouds—why shouldn't she?

At last, simply breaking its way through, it did not come out, and just as it had on that other night, it shone, Arline thought triumphantly, insolently, like a victor in her face.

"Why shouldn't I—why shouldn't I come out and shine?" she asked, leaping to her feet. "Why shouldn't I come out of—of all this, be a victor and shine too! Aren't there," and she clasped her hands, "things for *me* to light up—for me to shine upon!"

At this moment, as if it had given its message, the moon seemed to make a bow to her and hide behind a beautiful curtain.

But Arline knew it was still there. She told herself this, that it was still there, there to come out and shine again and it gave her strength—wonderful strength, she whispered to herself.

"After all," she said, "isn't it—isn't it the way we look at things? If his was a love fever, why wasn't mine?"

She felt greatly excited by this thought, excited and buoyed up, as one who has made a discovery.

But suddenly her heart fell and her spirits flagged. She had seen him in a vision, seen him as he walked away from her standing beneath her tree. All the delirium of him, all the delirium of their love, a thousand memories of it, swept her off her feet into utter darkness.

"It's not so easy to get well!" she said aloud, with a smile to the night and dropped to her seat.

And putting her arm on the wet rail of the bench she occupied, she turned slightly, pressed her face upon it and sobbed, sobbed actually for the first time since she parted from him.

"I'm going home," she said presently into the black pit she had made for her face, "the flowers are still blooming in my yard—I know they'll help me—I—"

The end of her sentence was drowned in those sobs, sobs that all this time she must have been repressing since they were now so beyond her control.

CHAPTER XXVI

All months except the really hot ones in Washington are beautiful. Certainly December is!

On a certain morning this fact proclaimed itself with unusual triumph.

In Winston's room, the well beloved room of his dreams, the sun shone, well, Arline would have said had she been there, almost *too* radiantly. She would, in her quiet lovely way, have no doubt stepped over without a word and lowered the shades to what she might have called a more mellowing angle.

But Arline was not there, and for Winston the day could not be too bright.

A letter from Arline lay on his desk. It bore the postmark Charleston, South Carolina, and a flower was enclosed in it. It was a letter that had liberated him—set him free. Arline had decided she would not be the central figure in the background of his life, the saint for him to neglect, return to, pray to, and ravage. What she said to him was that living in truth meant to her something more than that, that no matter how she loved him—and she became abandoned to words as she wrote of her love, words and tears, as the blots on the paper showed—she believed there must be, she did not know what, she did not claim to know, something in herself that was a finer truth for her to live up to than the one he had outlined.

She said she was sure he was right—she went so far as to say she considered his idea a great advance, as truth over lying, whether in marriage or out of it, must be, but—and Arline admitted that she might be a bit old-fashioned—she was sure she could not be a pioneer in such a dream of frankness. She did not say that the dream seemed all for his own benefit, Arline could never have done that, she couldn't even in her quiet moments admit it—once the very ghost of the thought brought the blood to her cheeks—so she told him instead that her flowers—one little messenger went to him—were comforting her greatly, that they were filled with wonderful truths, and she signed herself: your own until death.

To say that Winston was not touched by this letter would be to do him a great injustice. He was touched by it, and memories of Arline rather overcame him. He sat with it for quite a while in his hands, sat gracefully in his scarlet chair that he was so glad to get back to, the sunlight on it hurting his eyes, the words it contained hurting his heart.

"Arline," he said finally, pressing his lips to the letter, "my sweet woman!"

But Winston's heart was not actually in these words. . . . The fever had passed, and even the memories of it were not too painful. He had been separated from Arline for weeks, and there was very very much for him to do. His father, whom he had not seen since the death of his sister, whom he had treated shamefully, was coming to-day.

This meeting that in spite of filial affection was bound to be trying, sad, too, quite engrossed him. His sister had been his father's idol, and a very close brother and sister relationship had existed between them, also. On his arrival home he had experienced the natural grief over the situation suddenly as though hit in the face by it. He had marvelled at himself, shocked and horrified.

Added to the contemplated visit of his father, whom someone had told him had grown suddenly old, a visit that would bring up all that had occurred distressingly, his servant, his highly valued servant, had got tired of the situation and left. This, together with his inhuman conduct as far as his sister was concerned, he had to lay at Arline's door, which didn't help things, since he couldn't undo his conduct as to his sister and had to get another servant.

With the latter thought uppermost, he looked about him quite disgusted at how dust-covered everything was. He walked up and down handling his gold-coloured hands, the hands Arline had worshipped so, and telling himself he must get busy. His publisher had told him this yesterday, a bit impatiently, too.

The telephone rang.

He turned to answer it, and a few moments later he gave audience to a Japanese calling to discuss with him the position of servant.

SELF-PRESERVATION

By Carlton Fitzgerald

SHE was all prepared to commit suicide. She wrote a long pleading note to her husband asking forgiveness and explaining the necessity for her act. She was tired of life. Her dull, apathetic existence was intolerable. The bauble of society had no charm for her. So she would kill herself.

"Don't mourn me," she wrote, "live life and enjoy it."

Then she tiptoed to her husband's room and opened his desk. She carefully planted the sealed envelope in the centre of it and was about to close it when her eye was attracted by a protruding corner of a photograph. She took it up. It was a picture of a young girl, beautiful and radiant. On the reverse side, in a small feminine hand, was inscribed, "To my Most Adorable —from Doris."

She quickly replaced the photograph and snatched the letter from the desk. She crushed it in the palm of her hand and left the room. Her husband was in the library and she found him there. An argument ensued. Many words were spoken and a multitude of bitter ones were hurled at him. She wept, and in a fit of rage tore a book to shreds.

Then she summoned her chauffeur and directed him to drive to her hairdresser's.

THE difference between eighteen and twenty-eight is that eighteen finds in world-old experience brand-new thrills, while twenty-eight seeks in brand-new experience to recapture world-old thrills.

WHEN a man bullies you, remember he is only trying to regain his self-respect after grovelling to some other woman.

A WOMAN isn't half so anxious to have you kiss her as she is to have you desperately wanting to.

MAMMA

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I

SHE was girlish and blonde. As she stole quietly into the breakfast room and slipped into her chair, there was that in her shrinking prettiness that conveyed undeniably her sense of guilt. The illusive glow lent to the face by the peach coloured *négligée* only fostered the idea of uneasiness and a vague tendency to apology.

"Good-morning," came from her lips in the form of a great sigh.

"Oh, good-morning!" This from Rawson Ward, entrenched behind his newspaper.

Another sigh as she rang for hot coffee and studied reflectively the opposite wall. Then, lowering her eyes to her plate,

"I had meant to be here on time *this* morning," she said softly.

"Why should you?" The question came clear and incisive as Rawson lowered his paper just enough to peer over the top of it.

"Because this is to be such a great day in your life—" she began.

"But what does that matter to you?" he said sharply.

"Rawson!" she murmured, as her blue eyes clouded and her lower lip began to tremble.

He ignored this.

"What is the name of your thesis?" she said at last.

"It's in Latin," he answered shortly.

Again she sighed.

"I adore Latin," she said meditatively. "I went to a Roman Church once and I shall never forget it. The Latin and incense and music were so beautiful. And one of the priests looked like Apollo—that is, the way Apollo would look if he had clothes on—"

"Well, there'll be no incense and music in this business," answered Rawson. "Nor Apollos, either. Just a lot of hard-headed Columbia professors—"

Again there was silence, broken at last by a murmur on the part of the lady.

"I wish I had never sent you to Harvard."

Rawson put down his paper at that and pushed back his chair.

"It *is* a wonder you didn't send me to a finishing school!" he said. "I suppose, of course, you were out with that fellow Peterson last night!"

The rhapsodic look in her eyes was the only answer.

Then, after a pause, "He *is* adorable!"

Rawson had risen angrily and was walking up and down.

"But what under the heavens can you see in a professional dancer?"

She raised her blue eyes to his. "He dances divinely—"

"But his mentality—" Rawson started to protest.

The lady had lighted a cigarette by now, and had closed her eyes as she inhaled the first whiff. She lingered a minute over the deliciousness of it and then opened her eyes again.

"His mentality? Oh, yes! But as to that, you know, I don't give a damn for mentality."

Rawson drew himself up. "And you wonder I have never asked Professor Gleason here!"

"You mean you think he would bore me—" she said.

"No, I do not!" said Rawson. "I

mean I think you would violate his every sensibility."

"And you are sure he wouldn't enjoy having his sensibilities violated? These Boston blue bloods—"

Rawson showed himself thoroughly angry now.

"Stop that!" he cried. "None of your silliness, there! Do you realize what Gleason has meant to me?"

"I hate Frederick Ames Gleason," she murmured as if to herself.

"Do you realize," Rawson went on, "that before I went to college I knew nothing of life except as a sort of merry-go-round? That I was brought up without an atom of respect for anything. Why, good God! I wasn't even taught to read till I was ten!"

She shook her head sadly at that. "And you reproach me, because—"

"No," he cut in, "I do not reproach you. It was simply that you didn't know any better. But I won't stand by and have you cast aspersions on the man who has painstakingly taught me there are things in life worth while. Do you think I'd ever have got where I am if it weren't for Gleason's influence?"

"Just where *are* you?" she sighed up at him.

"Where *am* I? Where—*am* I?" he cried. "Come to the meeting to-day and you'll see where I am."

"That's exactly what I came down early to tell you," she said quietly as she rose. "I am going to the meeting. I'm tired of being kept out of sight like a naughty child when your stupid old professors and Boston friends are about. I've told you to ask them here time and again and you have always made excuses. Don't you suppose I've guessed? Don't you suppose— These whole three years since you've been out of college working for that ridiculous P. H. something, you've shut me out of your life. Well, I'm tired of it. I shall be there to hear that nice thesis of yours with the Latin name and I shall force an introduction to the right honourable F. A. Gleason before I get through."

She had spoken with delicate deliberateness, but her voice broke at the end and she turned away. Rawson had an uncomfortable consciousness as he stood there that she had read in his face the terror with which her suggestion filled him and that she had turned away to laugh. He never was sure just what the trembling of that lower lip meant and resented bitterly the uncertainty it always placed him in.

"But you *can't* go!" he said, not knowing just what line to take.

"Why not? It's open to the public, isn't it?"

Then, dropping again into her usual wistfulness,

"What gown, Rawson, should you suggest? Peterson likes me in that new Lucile. And I wonder if I could get a fresh bunch of orchids here by eleven!"

"But you mustn't!" cried Rawson now almost beside himself.

"You mean, orchids aren't *au fait* at eleven in the morning?" she queried gently. "Well, lilies of the valley then —I'll telephone—"

Rawson seized her by the wrist as she started for the door. She yielded to him quietly.

"You *can't* go. You're treating this thing flippantly as you treat everything else. This is the most serious occasion of my life—"

"Exactly!" she said and there was a momentary steely glitter in the blue eyes as they looked into his. "I have been able to bring myself gradually to forgive Professor Gleason many things—"

"Forgive?" gasped Rawson. "What things? What do you mean?"

"I forgive him the hero worship he inspired in you. I forgive him the fact he has used his influence to make you so ultra-proper and upright."

She laughed softly to herself as she read the anger in Rawson's face.

"But I shall never forgive him the fact that he has destroyed your sense of humour. Why, you know, even Peter (that's what I call Peterson when we're alone together) still has his. And after

weeks of cabaret dancing! Incredible, isn't it? So you want the black dress and lilies. I'll take my knitting in case I'm bored. I'm knitting Ito a sweater, you know, a lovely mauve!"

She gathered up the train of her *négligée* and sighing a slight surrender to fatigue as the natural result of a domestic disagreement, she started out. At the door she turned with a wan smile.

"It promises to be a great day for both of us, doesn't it, dear?"

Then murmuring something about telephoning and lilies, she disappeared.

II

RAWSON WARD'S thesis that procured for him his P. H. D. was considered of such a remarkable nature that he had been invited to read it at a meeting of the New York Sociological Society. The honour was a signal one and Rawson had immediately written his old sociology professor, Frederick Ames Gleason, to come to New York to share the glory of his success. It was, indeed, a momentous occasion for young Ward, and one likely to be of potent influence in moulding his career. He had given up much to carry on his researches the preceding year; the prospects were he would delve even deeper in the future.

"It's all that horrible Gleason man," sighed Mrs. Ward and gave up calculating on her son as an escort.

The lady arrived late at the meeting. The lilies had proved refractory and defied proper adjustment. Then there had been a question of Ito's usual morning airing.

"I'll take him with me," she had decided and tucked him carelessly under her arm.

The usher showed signs of expostulating when she appeared, but her smile and the low, confidential murmur, "I am Mrs. Rawson Ward," worked wonders.

She let her eyes linger on the various men about her and then selected a seat in the back row. Some one was droning a preliminary address from the platform. She slipped into the seat quietly and then studied reflectively the row of stiff, unyielding backs before her. Then she slanted a look at the man beside her and decided she liked the way his arms were folded. A glance at the platform revealed Rawson with his hair parted in the middle and monumentally serious.

"Poor old Rawdy!" she murmured to herself. "If I could only do something to save him!"

Ito, in the meantime, had discovered the crowd as too slow to suit his Pekinese tastes and showed unmistakable signs that a yap was imminent. His uneasy stirring attracted the good-looking man next her, who took no pains to conceal the marked surprise the presence of the dog, as well as the lady, evoked. The grey eyes evinced amusement in their shrewd depths.

"What *will* happen if he yelps?" she asked as she returned the smile.

"Doubtless you will be ejected with brute force," he answered.

"How terrible!" she murmured in a voice weak as from fright.

And as they looked at each other quite thoroughly, the worst happened. Ito gave a vicious yap. Both started and grabbed for the tiny creature's head. The lady got there first, but it was the strength displayed in the strong hand that covered hers that prevented further repetition of that shrill bark.

They rested so a minute staring wide eyed at each other. So engrossed were the people about them in what was taking place on the platform that the incident had passed unnoticed. So much for the concentration fostered by pedagogy.

"What shall we do?" she whispered.

"I'll take him out," he answered.

"My car is outside. Mrs. Rawson Ward—"

She drew her little hand out from under his and in a second the wicked Ito had been whisked away.

A few minutes later the man came back.

"Thank you!" she said and drew her-

self up with dignity to listen to a new speaker who had taken the floor.

In a few seconds she showed herself bored and restless.

"Do you know many of these people?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Then which is the horrible Gleason ogre?" she queried.

He laughed at that in a subdued way and pointed to a middle-aged man on the platform.

"The fourth from the end, left hand side, glasses—"

"Oh!" she protested. "Worse than I expected! The bald, fat one?"

Again he nodded. Then with an amused curiosity:

"Why the aversion? He's really very nice. In fact, we're great friends!"

She considered seriously a moment as her eyes rested upon him.

"I should like to tell you the whole story," she brought out at last.

"Why not?" he said. Then looking about, "But it couldn't be here. Couldn't we—er—resort to the car, too, for a while? We could be back in time for your son's paper. It *is* your son, I take it, though one would never believe—"

She looked down to avoid the obvious admiration in the grey eyes and proceeded to rearrange the lilies that had been sadly crushed in the rumpus with Ito.

Then, shaking her head sadly, "No, it can't be done. We must stay here."

Again she fixed her attention on the stage with heroic determination, but two minutes seemed the limit of her powers of concentration. She sighed at length and looked at him wanly.

"It's so hot in here," she said.

"You shouldn't stay, really," he pleaded. "You know you might faint."

She rose hurriedly at that and he followed her out.

When they had reached the vestibule, she leaned against the side of the door and shut her eyes.

"I am all right now. You go back."

He said nothing, but remained perfectly still.

Then, opening her eyes, but avoiding his look, she went down the steps to her car which had just drawn up at the curb.

"Drive about for half an hour and then come back," she said to the chauffeur and smiled a look of sweet understanding at her new-found friend as he got in beside her.

"I want to hear it all!" he said and settled himself comfortably for her confession.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" she asked. "I can take it all more impersonally if there's a cloud between us."

"A pillar of cloud by day and of flame by—"

"Have you a match?" she interrupted. "Thank you."

"I was married very young!" she began.

"All women are," he remarked sententiously.

She looked her reproach, then went on.

"My husband was stricken with a terrible disease within a year of our marriage." Her tone touched tragic depths and she leaned forward as if athirst for sympathy. "I don't know the name of it, but it took strange forms—philanthropy, sociological research, cruelty-to-animal societies, and all the rest of it. In the end he lost sight of life as anything but a higher duty. "Oh—" she breathed a shivering little sigh. "It was terrible for me!"

"What was the end?" asked the man slowly with just the right amount of awe for the tragedy involved in her story.

"I divorced him, and he has lived abroad ever since." She looked out of the window as if in introspective muse. "I determined to bring my son up in ignorance of responsibility, law and so forth. His education was haphazard. All went well till he managed to pass his Harvard exams at random. Then it was I saw he had inherited this pedagogic taint, this—oh!—this dreadful thing! I saw he was taking his first exams seriously, so in a frenzy I planned a house party, wired him to

come home at once. What happened? He showed the wire to Professor Gleason, who in his smug Boston way determined to upset all my well-laid plans. Rawson did *not* come home. From that time on he has been attempting to reform *me*, bring *me* to a sense of a higher duty than amusement."

She shook her head sorrowfully as she wound up. "Rawson is ruined. He neither smokes nor drinks. He loves birds and considers people in the slums human. Do you wonder, really, I hate Gleason? The tortures of the Inquisition are as nothing to what I could achieve to get my proper revenge."

The man put back his head and laughed heartily.

"But when all is said and done, Gleason isn't a bad fellow," he started to protest.

"That's exactly it. He's deadly proper and, besides, he's fat and bald."

"But what *are* we going to do about it?" the man protested.

"If I could only shake Rawson's belief in him, don't you see? Then there might be a chance! Couldn't I ask him to tea and administer a powder or something that would drive him mad? He might blow up the subway or shoot somebody or kiss one of the maids as a result."

"Oh!" she wound up as the man smiled his appreciation of her ingenuity. "A woman thinks of everything in a great emergency."

"Suppose I tell him you want to have a confidential talk. I'll persuade him to come to see you."

"Will you?" she queried brightly.

"To-day," he suggested.

But she shook her head. "I'm dining with an adorable South American this evening. It's in the nature of a delicious ordeal. You see he doesn't talk English, nor I Spanish. So I need the afternoon to rest. Besides, I'm having a marcel at five."

"To-morrow, then?"

"To-morrow," she agreed. "790 Park."

"Perhaps—I ought—to tell you something of myself," he faltered after a slight pause.

But she cut in with a protest:

"No, no! I want it just this way. There's a romantic lure—Good heavens! We're way over time."

The man showed a genuine dismay when he saw the hour. There was a hurried order given, a quickening of speed and in a few minutes they pulled up once again at the hall. The sound of prolonged clapping from within proved the end of something.

"It's best not to admit you've been here," said the man, as he pressed her hand in farewell. "Till to-morrow."

She watched him take the steps two at a time, noting particularly his tall athletic build. Then with a strange lazy little smile, all her own, she gave the order home.

III

"MAMMA! MAMMA!"

It was as she was dressing for luncheon the next day that the call echoed through the house. She raised her delicate brows slightly and sent her maid to find out what was the matter. A minute more and Rawson was in the room. His irritability of the morning before had passed and in its place was a satisfaction that ran to bubbling confidence. Such a mood was becoming more and more infrequent with him; it was with a joy hardly suppressed she marked it in contrast to the chill placidity that usually evidenced his well being.

She kept herself in control, however. Rising she imprinted a kiss with all solemnity upon his brow.

"My boy!" was all she said.

Rawson was embarrassed.

"I was sorry, after all, you did not come," he began hastily to cover his confusion. "Gleason said my enunciation was perfect and the thesis a marvel. They applauded me steadily for five minutes."

"Tell me all the rest of it," she said, reseating herself at her dressing table with all dignity.

"Then we went to the Harvard Club for lunch."

"Who?"

"Gleason and I. And last night twenty of the Sociological Club had a dinner at the Astor. It was glorious."

"What was the menu?" she said pensively. "You are never interested in what we have to eat at home."

"Oh, it wasn't what we had to eat!" Rawson hastened to explain. "It was the company."

"Of course! How stupid of me! What did you talk about?"

"All sorts of fascinating things—the reversion to types—"

"*Really?*" she said and stopped, a picture of arrested attention with powder puff suspended in air. "But of course, you were all men together," she said, relaxing.

Rawson looked blank.

"And everybody said awfully clever things?" she helped him out.

"Awfully! Gleason, in particular. He was in great spirits—"

"Then there *was* champagne." She put in softly.

Rawson did not hear her. "There was one remark of Gleason's," he said with a laugh. "Now, what was it? Well, it's slipped my mind now. But it was very telling. There's no use talking, Gleason does dominate."

The lady had finished her toilet by now, and turning raised her beautiful eyes to her son's face.

"Rawson," she asked and enunciated her words distinctly. "Has Professor Gleason ever really lived?"

Rawson reddened violently. "I don't believe he has ever looked at a woman," he protested.

She wrinkled her brows into a semblance of worry.

"What a peculiar conception of living," she murmured. "Is it yours? Or his? It does not seem, somehow, quite proper."

Rawson showed himself as not following. His mother's vagaries of conversation were too bewildering.

"All I can say," he wound up, "is that Gleason is the finest man one could ever meet. You know, I've been thinking it over since last night. I think, perhaps, I might bring him here to tea."

As he got no response, he followed up his own suggestion.

"He could come this afternoon maybe. He, really, has a good looking face."

Her lower lip trembled a little as she said, "Yes, I know."

"How do you know?" he questioned quickly.

"I've seen his picture," she answered. "But no! Not this time. I'm busy today. We'll arrange to have him on his next visit to town. After all, he might not so utterly disapprove of me—"

She said this last with such a wistfulness that Rawson felt contrite. He came over and kissed her awkwardly as he said,

"If you could only learn to take life seriously!"

She altered her mood at that.

"Why should I? When there is so much that is charming and frivolous to divert one? Ah, Rawson! If you could have heard de Cuevas make love to me last night. There was one thing in particular he said. Of course, he doesn't talk English, but it was very telling. The most wonderful eyes! The poor boy didn't have enough money to pay the bill. It must be so tragic to be short of money when you talk broken English. Of course, I had insisted on ordering the champagne, which makes me think, I *did* drink too much last night."

She seized a hand mirror and gave her countenance a thorough scrutiny.

"After all, Rawson," she said as she put the mirror down, apparently satisfied with the image it gave back, "Why shouldn't I drink as much champagne as I want, if I can still look twenty?"

As he listened to his mother prattle on, Rawson's spirits obviously flagged. He could only repeat as he turned heavily to the door as if with an undue weight of responsibility upon his shoulders,

"If you'd *only* take life more seriously!"

She sighed after he had gone out.

"He *is* incorrigible," she said pensively.

IV

On her way to the drawing room that afternoon, she gave a little note to the footman in the hall.

"Is Mr. Rawson in?" she asked.

"Just come in, Madam," answered the man.

"See that he gets this note immediately," she said. "It's very important."

When she entered the drawing room, she looked about in surprise.

"He wouldn't come?" she queried as she went forward.

She was dressed in a cream coloured chiffon that fell about her in graceful folds and seemed to accentuate the clinging helplessness of her. There was a quaver in the voice that betokened supreme disappointment and the man, waiting for her, had a startled suspicion the depths of her blue eyes were heavy with tears.

"No," he answered as he took both her outstretched hands and held them in his. "I couldn't persuade him to come. But I—I couldn't help coming myself. I thought perhaps I—we—that is, I could give you some advice. We might talk it over again, you know."

He suspected a lurking amusement in the eyes now, so smiled broadly.

"Hang it all! I had to come. You're not going to send me away yet. You will give me a cup of tea if only in charity. And then, perhaps, afterwards I'll tell you something of myself—"

But she shook her head.

"I don't want to talk about you. I want to talk about myself," she said lightly.

They seated themselves on a divan in front of the grate. He piled the pillows up behind her and then they smiled at each other with a full sense of the intimate warmth of the setting. She sighed a little at last and turned away from his eyes.

"Do you believe in reversion to type?" she brought out finally.

He could not but laugh at the irrelevancy of it.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I don't know," she admitted. "But Rawson's always talking about it. Isn't it getting back to what you were when you were a baby?"

"Hum!" he said. "Yes, something of the sort! Oh, I see. We're going to talk about you when you were a baby!"

She gave an impatient little gesture.

"Oh, no! When I said I wanted to talk about myself, I meant about my problem in connection with Rawson."

"Ah! Then Rawson as a baby is the point of departure."

"Exactly!" she smiled. Then with a tender light of reminiscence in her eyes, "He was so helpless and irresponsible—"

"Isn't it—" he suggested tentatively, "of the nature of babies?"

She gave him a look of commiseration for his ignorance.

"Certainly not!" she said incisively. "Some babies are born bullies. I always seem to know, just from looking at them. Why, I can tell a policeman from a politician at six months!"

"How stupendous!" he exclaimed.

She melted to wistfulness again.

"Rawson was so debonair, so sweet in his helplessness, so unreliable—"

"And it is to that you wish him to revert," he began.

"Yes," she said sadly. Then brightening, "You do understand so quickly. I have had no one to sympathize with me in my sorrow—"

She leaned forward and put out her hand. He took it. They rested so a minute. Then she withdrew it softly and turned away, only to turn back again in a second with a practical business-like air.

"As to this Gleason. He was no doubt a monster of pedagogy from the cradle. I can see him now—a fat little

thing with his eyes too close together and horrid pudgy hands!"

The man laughed.

"How long have you known him?" she went on.

"We were college friends," he answered. "That's some twenty years!"

She thought a moment. "I should like to feel Gleason had sowed a few wild oats. If I could put my finger on even one oat—" She looked at him steadily.

"You'd take that oat direct to Rawson," he said with a smile.

She shook her head. "No, I'd promise. It would be just for my own satisfaction."

He smiled. "You are too charming to be trustworthy."

She showed herself hurt at that. "You think I'd break my promise—"

"No indeed! Not break it! But you are a past master at implication—"

She straightened up at that. "Very well! I don't want to hear anything. It is sufficient that you have admitted there *is* something in Gleason's past you can't tell."

"I didn't admit that," he began, and then laughed. "You know, if I were sure you'd never meet Gleason—"

She feigned indifference.

"I'd be tempted to tell you a few things just to compel your respect for him."

"Were they as bad as that?" she asked in surprise.

"Infinitely worse!" he responded.

"Dear old human nature! It *does* pop up, doesn't it?" She commented philosophically. Then: "If I could ascertain there had been *one* woman in the life of Professor Frederick Ames Gleason—"

The man nodded sagely. "I should say about one—at a time." He spoke as with a relish at being drawn out against his will.

"Oh!" cried the lady in horror. "The monster! And it is to that man my son's soul has been entrusted!"

Then with a drop into pensiveness: "Tell me more!"

There was a plaintive note in the voice that intensively invited revelation. The man hesitated slightly a second and then gave himself up to the luxury of real gossip.

"Well, you see, Gleason is perhaps a typical case. So why shouldn't we discuss him? As I remember him in college days, he was quite irresponsible, up to any absurdity, volatile in the extreme. Then came a period of years abroad and a woman's influence, New York later and other women! And so it went till he was brought up short by the offer of a professorship at Harvard. He *had* managed to keep up his work in spite of outside distractions which argues something for the man's will. Then with a full sense of his own unworthiness he is placed on a pedestal, worshipped by his pupils, forced to live up to their idealized conception of him. There are times, doubtless, when he'd give anything in the world for a little diversion, for a change—times, even, when he gets so desperate he'd like to kick off his shoes right in the classroom and display to his adoring pupils the clay of which his feet are made. You see, after all, perhaps, old Gleason is more to be pitied than hated!"

She had listened, all soft sympathy. There was a pause. The clock on the mantel struck five.

She rose hurriedly and went over to the fireplace. Her face was lighted with a glow and her eyes showed dark as with suppressed emotion. The man had risen, too, and faced her.

"Ah!" she cried, and her voice trembled. "We are all dual personalities. I—I, myself! I'm not the frivolous butterfly Rawson thinks me, the flippant poseur you think. Deep down I am a serious woman, a real woman with the desire to help a real man, I—I—"

Her voice broke and she put out her hands in the passion of her appeal.

The man felt himself gripped by the intensity of the struggle that he read in the clouded depths of her beautiful eyes, and suddenly took her in his arms.

She gave a little cry that was almost a whimper and then settled into his em-

brace with a great sigh. Their lips met in a kiss of perfect understanding.

"*My God!*"

The words startled through the air and the man and woman fell apart precipitantly.

"Oh!" Mrs. Ward put up her hand to rearrange a stray wisp of hair. "Is that you, Rawson? Well, you see Professor Gleason doesn't *entirely* disapprove of me."

The guilty look on the face of the man beside her gave way to confused surprise.

"What!" he cried. "You—you knew all the time?"

"Of course!" she said with a nod. "I spotted you in a second from your pictures! Bald and fat, indeed!"

She laughed merrily.

"You see, Rawson—" she said, turning to the door.

But Rawson had already fled, white with anger and trembling in the depths of his disillusion.

Then with her usual plaintive sigh she turned back to the man.

"Thank God, we've saved him!" she said. "But I—I somehow want to be quite honest with you. I *am* honest underneath. I sent for Rawson to be here at five promptly. And— and yesterday at the lecture I *pinched* Ito."

"Now we can have our tea," she said brightly, as relieved of the weight of a heavy responsibility. "Is it cream or lemon?"

And with the memory of their recent kiss vivid between them, they smiled into each other's eyes over the teacups.

NIGHTFALL

By Sara Teasdale

WE will never walk again
As we used to walk at night,
Watching our shadows lengthen
Under the gold street-light
When the snow was new and white.

We will never walk again
As we used to do
In spring when the park was sweet
With midnight and with dew,
And the passers-by were few.

I sit and think of it all
And the blue June twilight dies . . .
Down in the clanging square
A street-piano cries
And stars come out in the skies.

HE is the happiest man who plays every game as if there were no such thing as defeat or victory.

I LOATHE HIM

By Patience Trask

I LOATHE him.

* * * * *

I said I hated men who remarked about my lips, my jewels and the dainty way I ate artichokes.

I told him I felt more at ease wearing strictly tailored garments than shimmering gowns that clung to my slender figure.

I said I abominated soft lights, plaintive music and amorous poetry.

I said I despised men who told me my eyes were as mystic as purple shadows at twilight.

I told him I hated women who used their long, narrow eyes and red lips and white shoulders to beguile men.

I said women had mistaken ideas of modesty.

I said it was more refreshing to swear than to weep.

I told him it pleased me more to have my intellect admired than my French figure.

I said I did not tire at golf.

I said I abominated knitting.

I said I preferred a pipe to a perfumed cigarette.

I said I could look at a snake without screeching.

I told him I was trustworthy, outspoken and broad-minded.

* * * * *

I loathe him.

He treated me like a man.

WHEN a woman looks at a photograph of herself taken in youth, she sees herself as she might have been had she married the man she loved. When a man looks at a photograph of himself in youth, he sees himself as he might have been had he not married.

THERE is something pitiful and grotesque in taking one's own love affairs seriously. But not to be able to do so, at least once in a lifetime, is tragic.

LA CROCE IS AT HOME TO HER FRIENDS

By Lawrence Vail

I

A FEW hours ago I received the following telegram:

"I die to-morrow. Come to me to-night—at eleven. Isabel Croce."

You may understand the strange chaos of thoughts that surged within me when I tell you that for twenty years Isabel Croce and I had not exchanged word or glance. For the length of that time she had been to me what she had been to everyone else—the artist who had held Europe and the two Americas spellbound with the rich originality of her vocal interpretations. Indeed, her operatic career is so well known to all those interested in music fashions, scandal and advertising, that I have little or no excuse to dwell upon it.

Moreover, I felt sure that if what she wrote to me was true—and knowing her large, free personality, I had no cause to doubt her—it would be probable that the papers would be soon teeming with biographical notices of her. We, the public, would be informed of the place which saw her birth, of the tonal quality of her first squeak, of the men she had loved, of the size of her shoes, of the religious and political views I am sure she never possessed, but may—all things are possible—have professed under the stress of wine or hysterical circumstance. Death, I am told, is the great leveller of all things. I prefer to see it as the great and ironical distorter of facts. I have seen it play strange tricks with the actual, irregular pattern of life, bringing into exaggerated relief episodes that were merely cursory and incidental. It may bring the same sleep to the just and unjust, and also shed a false light of glory on a word spoken in jest or a pair of stockings.

As I walked uptown to keep my last appointment with Isabel Croce, it was not the artist whose career I had followed for two decades that I remembered, but a strange, intense, capricious woman I had loved for two weeks. I thought not of the divine Tosca singing with a never to be forgotten ardour her lyric life song—*'Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore'* (God knows with what powerful truth she would be able to sing that song when the hour would come for her to die), nor of Carmen, voicing with feverish abandon the gay, cruel law of caprice. There passed before me the image of a slim, nervous girl of eighteen, agile of limb, more agile of mood, her narrow grey eyes smiling sadly at me across a breakfast table.

Our story had been simple and cruel—like all Nature's true stories. Both of us were at Milan at the time: she to appear as Louise at the Scala, I as the correspondent of the *Musical Chronicle*. For three successive nights we had met at supper, at a restaurant in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. She had hardly looked at me, I am sure that she had not listened to me. Then, suddenly, on the third night she had turned her eyes on me:

"Come to the ends of the world with

me," she had said, "and love me—forever."

I cannot tell you whether I had been in love with her, all that I know is that I was swept off my feet as a fragment of hay in the breast of a hurricane. For two weeks we were all things to each other. I think she carried me with her when she left me to sing, which must have annoyed the tenor more than a little. And then one morning, as we were starting our breakfast, I surprised her looking meditative.

I asked her what was troubling her.

She sighed and nervously crumbled a roll.

I repeated my question.

"It's all over," she said.

"What's over?"

"I don't love you any more."

I pleaded with her. I was angry, I wept, I jeered. She kept eating her breakfast in a detached manner. Then she rose and held out her little, frail hands.

"Good-bye," she said.

"When shall I see you again?"

"What's the use?" she returned. "We could only spoil things. But remember"—of a sudden she grew very serious—"I shall always keep what you have given me. No one will ever be able to ruin what has been between us."

"If it's over," I cried, "then it's entirely over. I wish to forget you entirely."

"As you will," she answered. "I don't think it is wise of you. One receives so little that is genuine. If I were you I would consider it precious."

I understood her little at the time. I told myself that I had been a fool, and resolved to erase from my mind and blood the memory of her. And I was strengthened in my resolution when I saw her—three weeks later—in the arms of Libowski, the pianist.

I never spoke to her after that morning. A year later I heard her as Butterfly at the Opéra Comique. Her voice had developed, she had it in perfect control, it had the precious true swoop of a bird of prey. My wound had healed then, or I thought it had healed. It was the artist, not the woman, who moved me. Since then I have tried to make abstraction of her genius, and love it as something apart from her personality. But that night, twenty years after we had parted, as I walked up Fifth Avenue to her house on the upper East Side, it was not the artist I remembered, but the woman who had frankly and simply given me what she could as long as she had been able to give it me, and, two weeks later, had taken herself away from me with the same frank simplicity.

I knew very deeply at that moment that it was petty pride and cowardice that had led me to try to forget the woman in her. After all we men give the truest in us to our vanities. We deny the sincerity of our blood to save the mental image of us. We wear out the iron of life in preserving the crease in our trousers. We don't wish to give anything without receiving interest for it—not only in love but in flattery. We are eternally apologizing to ourselves for our emotions.

These were the thoughts that possessed me as I walked up town to keep my last appointment with Isabel Croce—these, and an unbridled curiosity.

II

It was a quarter past eleven when I rang at the door of the house which served as a home to Isabel Croce whenever she sojourned in America. As she had kept me waiting twenty years for this interview I was not displeased to be a quarter of an hour late—a proof that in spite of the philosophical trend of the thoughts I had entertained in the street, I had in reality relinquished little of my vanity. It was destined, moreover, that my pride should suffer before the evening waxed very old. I had expected, of course, to find Isabel alone, probably thinking, in the back of my mind, that she might have a desire to apologize for her casual treatment of me. You can

therefore imagine my disappointment and sense of personal injury when I discovered that nearly a dozen men were waiting for her in the smoking-room.

If I resented their presence, it was evident that they bore me no greater friendliness. Further, they appeared to resent one another as much as they resented me. It was not long before I discovered that they had all come on the same errand.

We composed, indeed, a singularly motley and variegated assemblage. On a sofa facing the entrance sat Libowski, the Polish pianist, a man with long black hair, thin nervous lips that never ceased twitching, and vague grey blue eyes that always appeared to be focussing something invisible. Near him I perceived Marmaduke Pool, the financier, reckoned one of the seven wealthiest men in the country—a tall spare man with high cheek bones, shaggy eyebrows, and a red clean-shaven face. Close to the fireplace stood Beppo Carnevalli, formerly manager of the Fenice, at Venice, more recently connected with the Opera House at Rio. He was a rotund, heavy, genial Neapolitan, a man whose boisterous equanimity I had never seen disturbed; on this occasion, however, as nervous and self-conscious as a schoolboy at a grown up tea party. Scarcely more at their ease were Ernest de Ségur, a writer of witty reviews for the *Mercure de France*, and Colonel MacSullivan of the Indian army.

In addition to these notables I saw several strangers; a young, pink-cheeked fop puffing very rapidly at an empty cigarette holder; a red-faced burly bartender from Aberdeen; and a short, pompous, professorial creature who seemed to carry all Potsdam in his strut and chest. But the most peculiar figure of all was a lean haggard man with a grey ragged beard, a long thin nose that seemed like a question mark, and little feverish blood-shot eyes. His tattered clothes hung loosely about him: they consisted of a mud-coloured shirt, a threadbare tweed coat, and a pair of baggy corduroy trousers. One had the impression that he had slept under all the bridges of the world, and collected upon his person the dust of all ages and roads. It was hard to imagine him making use of a fork, walking on a carpet, or taking a bath.

And yet he was the only man amongst us who appeared completely at his ease.

I nodded to Libowski and Pool and sank into a rocking chair next to the window. A tense, palpitating silence brooded over the room. There was in me an aching desire to scream, to smash a large Oriental vase that stood close at hand on a table, yet I was held speechless and motionless in the grip of a curious, unreasonable fear. I remember being acutely distressed at the creak of my chair, and making what seemed a superhuman effort to keep it quiet. I don't know that I can express it, but I had the sensation that every man in the room hated the others, that our thoughts, under some invisible form, were clashing and tearing at one another while our bodies looked on in numb silence. Then suddenly someone spoke—it was Graham, the fop—and his voice seemed to come from a cold, measureless distance.

"I say, don't we look like a pack of fools!"

A smothered peal of awkward, hysterical laughter followed this remark. Then the shaggy vagabond spoke:

"One must be a fool to look like a fool."

Graham blushed heavily and gave birth to a sound that was a blend of a sneeze and a giggle. I thought the tense, oppressive silence was once more to take possession of the room when de Ségur spoke, distinctly finishing his words:

"After all, is it not the outcome of our many disguises, to appear as we are—like fools?"

"There are some," I said, "who take a long time to reach this sublime conclusion."

As I spoke I happened—quite unconsciously—to catch the eye of the

little important Teuton. He glanced at me fiercely, bristling with aggressiveness.

"I came here to call on La Croce—not to be insulted by her lovers."

"It is a short journey," said the grim vagabond in answer to my remark, "if one has the courage. One has merely to walk to a mirror and open one's eyes."

I turned to Libowski who was standing next to me.

"Who is the old man?" I questioned in a low voice.

"His name is Rokosch," answered the pianist. "He's a mixture, I think, of Tartar and Spanish. Croce found him one day when he was starving on a roadside in Bohemia. She fed him and clothed him, saved his life in fact, for which he bears her a curious, furious resentment. She tells me that he is the only man she knows who has never tried to make love to her. For some reason she cannot bear to be without him. He is her evil genius, if there is such a thing."

"There are two sorts of men," Rokosch was crying, "imbeciles and fools. The imbeciles are those who know not that they are fools."

"I think," said Marmaduke Pool, "that if there are some men who can pride themselves on their superiority, we, gentlemen, can believe that we are they. There is not one of us who has not been loved by Isabel Croce. This places us in a separate category."

A murmur of approbation followed these words. I am sure that we were all grateful to Pool for having restored a measure of our self-respect. It was the only moment in the course of that eventful evening when we did not dislike one another.

A rough spasm of laughter shook the lean frame of Rokosch.

"You flatter yourselves. We have been nothing more than accidents by the wayside—receptacles for the surplus of passion which Croce did not put into her vocal gymnastics. Is one blade of grass less lowly than another because her foot had happened to tread upon it?"

"How do you know," I challenged with an enthusiasm utterly foreign to me. "Have you, Mr. Rokosch, a voice to talk to the herbs?"

"Well spoken, Sir," cried the Aberdeen bartender. "She is a mighty grand lass, and praise to the Lord that I have two hands to wring the neck of the man who speaks ill of her, however close he be to the grave. And the sweet noise she made in the world with her bonny white throat was the sweetest any creature can make. And the sweet silence she will make when she dies to-night will cause a great shadow to pass over the hearts of men."

Rokosch opened his mouth as though to retort, but his voice seemed to catch in his throat and his eyes turned to the ground.

Isabel Croce had entered the room.

III

Isabel Croce, her splendid figure closely swathed in black, crossed the room like a great calm shadow over a sun-tortured plain. No one spoke as she seated herself on a divan alongside of which stood a little round table covered with decanters and glasses. I shall make no attempt to describe her as she appeared to me then. Sometimes she seemed very gay, very young, very close to us. Now and then a strange sadness passed into her rain-coloured eyes—as though she had already left this tortured planet for a sweeter and more patient land.

She gave us a smile that warmed us like the rich sun of southern winters. It melted the rancour within us. Nothing possessed us then but a great simple faith in her.

I started when she spoke, so natural—almost trivial, sounded her words.

"My friends," she said, "you were all, if I remember rightly, at the Metropolitan Wednesday night."

There was a general murmur of assent.

"Carnevalli," she asked, "did I sing well?"

"You have never moved me so deeply," answered the Neapolitan, putting his hand on his chest.

Her head made a motion of entreaty.

"Carnevalli—tell me the truth. Was there not an instant, in the second act, when my voice was a half tone flat?"

"Croce, it can happen to anyone. Even the divine Patti—"

"It can happen to anyone, you say, well, it must not happen to me again. I might sing well to-morrow—I might sing no false note for a year, for three years I might deceive the general public, but one day—it must happen—my voice would crack. I don't wish to crack—either in art or in life."

"It will be time to worry when that time comes," said Carnevalli. "I assure you on my honour as a man, as a musician—"

"Can you assure me that I did not sing false on Wednesday?"

Carnevalli did not answer: he looked at the ground.

"My friends," said Isabel Croce, "I am going to do what few artists have had the courage to do—leave the stage before my voice fails. But I have not the courage to remain on this earth and not sing—I might as well promise never to talk again. If I leave the operatic stage, I shall have to leave another stage, too."

"What do you mean?" cried Graham.

"I mean, Sydney, that to-night—before it is too late—I am going to die."

There was in her voice such an impressive quality of inevitability that only one of us—Mr. Graham—had the force to protest:

"I say . . . I won't have it. . . . It's impossible. You must . . ."

He suddenly stopped as he felt the weight of the lean hand of Rokosch on his shoulder. He sank in his chair, trembling like a reed.

La Croce continued:

"My friends—you who have been my lovers—it is not to acquaint you with my decision that I have called you here to-night. I wish to let you know—before I die—exactly what each of you has meant in my life. I took you freely, spontaneously, when I felt that I could not exist without you. The moment I felt that I needed you no longer, or that you needed me less, I sent you away. I can say sincerely to-night that I never lived an hour with a man whom I did not love and who did not love me. I never, where love was concerned, lied to myself. I never let a man lie to himself for my sake."

She paused and poured herself a glass of coral liquid from a decanter. There was a general, indefinite movement of our bodies towards her as we watched the passage of the glass to her lips, but our feet seemed glued to the floor.

"This is wine," she said to us with a smile. Then, motioning to a slim decanter:

"This—I shall take later."

She laid down her glass and lit a cigarette.

"I can smoke as much as I wish to-night. You see, I don't intend to sing to-morrow. I wonder if one will be able to smoke . . . there . . . where death is."

She finished her cigarette in silence and then lit another. And she spoke to us.

"You, Carnevalli, were my first love. I loved you for the rich happiness in you. You taught me the wonder of obvious things. You showed me how glad and simple was the vast blue sky. You awoke in me a desire to understand the great, restless currents of life. Then came a day when you tempted me with glory as well as with love. One evening—it was in September—I discovered myself thinking more of the fame you might bring me than of the happiness you had brought. Next morning I left you."

The large head of the Neapolitan sank into his thick, robust hands. A sob shook his large body.

La Croce turned to Ernest de Ségur.

"I loved you because of the false, clever things you said about life and women. It was only much later that I

discovered that you were almost too clever to be human. Still—in spite of everything—you brought me a feeling for style and the exquisite. I loved you till the day when you could not resist the temptation of making a clever epigram about me."

Ernest de Ségur bowed his head and said not a word. His thin, ironical smile did not leave his lips, but I felt by the feverish way he twirled his moustache that something restless and passionate was brooding within him.

"I cared for you, Sydney," La Croce said to the young fop, "as a mother cares for her child. You brought some of my youth back to me—you made me remember a mood I had almost forgotten. It is because of what you stirred within me that I am able to love all my lovers to-night."

A smile that was almost malicious came over her face as she regarded the little German professor.

"I'm sure," she said to him, "that you won't understand what I am going to say to you. I loved you one day when you forgot to finish your beer when you were looking at me. You passed out of my life when I heard you expound your views on domesticity. Still, you taught me something about men, and more than I suspect even now about myself."

She looked at me.

"My love for you, Malcolm, was what is usually called a caprice. Yet I am not sure whether there is not in these fleeting fancies a spark more valiant and true than in long solid affections. They owe nothing to habit and all to themselves. I came to love you in the strangest way. One day, at Milan, I liked the way a lock of your hair fell over your eyes. And then one morning your hair seemed the ordinary hair of an agreeable boy."

As she spoke the vision of those two weeks when we had breathed as one being pulsed through me with a power that blurred everything around me. It was as though I were living those hours again in a matured, intensified form. I hardly heard what she said to Pool and MacSullivan. I think she told how the money king had given her a new sense of idealism, how the colonel had intensified in her the value of honesty. When I fully collected myself she was speaking to the burly saloon keeper from Aberdeen.

"No one," she was saying, "has loved me as impersonally as you, Richard Gregg. There was in you a strength, like that of live earth, and a shy mystery that was as the curve of your hills. I have never understood you, I don't understand you now. You were poor, you served beer in a detestable bar, and yet you seemed to possess the secrets of life. You never made phrases, and yet you spoke poetry—or rather it was the deep poetry of centuries that sang in you. No one has said such things to me—things so simple, so true, and so beautiful. Perhaps if your glens could speak they would talk like you. And when I gave myself to you—you were astonished. You hardly noticed it when I took myself away. I think you understood so many things, or rather all things understood themselves so well in you that there was no room for a woman. I was a slice of Nature to you—no more and no less than a bird, than a tree. I wanted to be more. So I left you."

Isabel paused. Our eyes were all turned towards Gregg. He was sitting very straight in his chair. There was a drop of moisture on his cheek, but I cannot make out to this day whether it was perspiration or a tear.

Of a sudden a rough voice rent the silence.

"And how did you love me—the beggar, the vagabond, the man you found on the road with no coat and no soul?"

A strange transformation came over Isabel Croce. Her magnificent body trembled—as it had never trembled on the stage.

"Rokosch—do not ask me!" she wailed.

"You are afraid to tell me. You know that you have never loved me, as you have never loved anyone. And you know that I cannot be deceived."

Isabel Croce rose to her feet. I had never seen her so tragic, so superb.

"I have loved you," she said in a voice every word of which was a moan, "as I have loved fear."

Whereupon she fell on the divan in a convulsion of tears.

IV

In the turn of a minute she had recovered her valiant serenity.

"I shall not ask you," she said, "to forgive my moment of hysterical weakness. There is nothing I wish to conceal from those who have been my lovers. I have, however, one last favour to ask of you. I wish each one of you to tell me what I have meant in his life."

Straight as a lance rose Colonel MacSullivan. He looked at Isabel as a soldier stares down the throat of cannon.

"Above everything in life," he said, "I have loved two things—duty and glory. The former was my dear mate through life, the latter my gay, wanton mistress. I only know one hour in which I was tempted to be untrue to them. That was when I held you in my arms—Isabel."

Then spoke Marmaduke Pool, financier.

"I am considered a success, Isabel, because by toil and energy I have been able to collect more than my share of the material goods of the world. But I know that I am a failure because I could not keep you. And yet, in spite of everything, the memory of my failure is more precious to me than anything else in life."

"I can say more than these men," spoke the little, pompous professor. There is no woman I know whom I would have preferred as a mother to my children. I would have married you if you had been German."

"What a loss has been mine!" murmured Isabel dreamily. "Why was I not born in Berlin?"

"Yes, Isabel, we have both been unfortunate. You might have made a greater man of me, I an honest woman of you."

A wild light danced for a moment in La Croce's eyes. Then she changed her mind and broke into a laugh.

"I thank you, Professor," she said, "for your sincerity, and for the compliment you think you have given me."

She turned to Ernest de Ségur:

"And what was I to you—something more than an aphrodisiac and something less than an epigram?"

"You do me an injustice," sighed the little, neat Frenchman, a sad smile hovering on his sensitive lips. "You are the only woman who has ever made me ashamed of my wit. I was too weak, too small to hold the joy you gave me, but the pain that came afterwards saved my soul from death. It stirred something simple and elemental within me, and awoke in me a horror for the chill emptiness behind my clever words."

Of a sudden I heard myself speaking, and my voice sounded like that of a stranger.

"I have also been saved from death by you. For twenty years I sought to deny you—I was afraid of the throbbing, live creature you had created in me. I tried to hide my injured pride behind a fortress of vanities. I thank you for having destroyed it. You have saved me twice—now and then."

Libowski spoke:

"I have loved two things in life—you and music. It seems to me to-night that they have become one."

"You were a child," said Carnevalli, "when you danced into my life, lingered there for an interval, and then went to make other lives rich. You seemed to me a miracle then—but merely a miracle, as all palpitating young things: like a smile met in the street and lost forever in the wild, seething city; like a spring river, all laughter and movement, then lost in the great moaning sea. I know now that though you seemed to leave me, the magic of you has never gone from my blood. I know this because I find life wonderful."

A short silence followed and then La Croce spoke:

"Now, tell me, Sydney, what have I been in your life?"

The young man looked at her imploringly.

"How can I tell you? I'm not clever at words like these men."

She smiled on him affectionately.

"No matter! Tell me!"

"Oh, Croce—you're the most wonderful woman—so strange, so beautiful. You've made my life something dizzy and marvellous—I can think of no cocktail that has the same effect. And now that you say you are going, I can't endure it, I can't understand."

"I am glad you are unhappy," said La Croce softly. "It means that one day you will be happy again—truly happy, not just contented as when I first met you. And perhaps you will be able to do what so few of us can do—recognize love when you find it."

For a few minutes the room was filled with the sobs of the young man-about-town. I don't think there were many among us who did not envy him—but our grief was too deep to melt. Then Gregg spoke:

"There is many a grand thing I loved in my life—the wild winds that make moan in the night, the long smile of the stars that never grows weary, and the young hope in birds and crocuses. I've loved the song of a girl as she and the sun went to work, the cool passage of ale down the throat of a man tired from labour, and the sweet sleep that makes grown men and women as lovely and harmless as children. The great, sorrowing folk have I loved and the dear groans they make, and the sorrowing sands and sorrowing rocks whose groans were so deep that no one ever heard them. But you, Isabel Croce, though there's the great quiet of snow in your breath and all the fevers of the live things that all ail in your heart, I have never loved. If I loved you I could hear only your moan in the winds and see only your eyes in the stars. I fear that if I loved you I would never be able to love anything else."

I had the curious illusion as he spoke that there was no one in the room but Gregg and Isabel Croce. Then suddenly, emitting a rough, raucous cackle, Rokosch rose from his chair.

"It is easy," he cried, "to tell how I have loved you—I have never loved you at all. I served as convenient vessel wherein you cast the bread that was too hard for your teeth and the passions too raw for your art. And all the time when you thought I was thanking you—paying you with my love for the bloodless scraps you threw at me—I was laughing at you in my heart. And I laugh now, Isabel Croce, because I know that you have not the courage to die."

She rose from the divan, splendid and white in her anger, and faced Rokosch.

"You are lying," she cried, "you know that you love me."

"I am not lying. I am the only man who has spoken the truth to you."

Her anger fell from her, a flush came to her cheeks, and she smiled on us all with a large, free serenity. Her hand was quite steady as she poured into a glass a pale greenish liquid.

"I shall know," she said calmly, "when I am dead which of you, my lovers, have lied to me. Remember that I shall be watching you." She raised the glass to her lips. "I drink to your joy and pain—may they both be as true, clean, and strong as my love for you. Good-bye."

She was convulsed for a moment, her hands clutched at the air, I saw the rain of all skies in her eyes. Then she fell on the ground like a doll released by the capricious hands of a child. The only sound to rend the death silence was that of a glass breaking into glittering splinters.

V

I KNOW not what happened in me: I only remember that my ears registered a few heavy sobs and the sounds of men's feet leaving the room. Then, after a measureless interval, I felt a

strange power that seemed outside of me pulling me out of my chair. My legs seemed of cotton, something buzzed in my brain, my mouth seemed distressingly dry.

There was no one in the room save the dead woman, Rokosch and myself. I found myself standing in front of him trying to lift his head, which had sunk over his chest. Suddenly a wild spasm of laughter possessed me.

Rokosch was stone dead.

SACRIFICE

By Charles S. Zerner

THEY sat in silence, bathed in the mellow lamplight. His arm slowly encircled her waist and she smiled as he drew her closer. She experienced a warm thrill and her heart leaped like wildfire. She felt a maddening impulse to throw her arms about him, to kiss him, to hold her cheek close to his and dream. . . .

But she frowned and placed her elbow between them. She struggled as he attempted to kiss her and freed herself from his embrace. Then she rose from the *chaise longue* and in tones half angry, half indignant, said,

"I guess all you men are alike."

CONFIDENCE

By Louis Untermeyer

SUPPOSING the night should roar
Like a great beast unchained,
And the river in front of my door
Should rise with a rending voice;
Though all the leaves of the oak
In a gust of derision were rained,
And the winds should tramp till they broke
All beauty, like fragile toys—

Still I would smile and have peace
Though the passionless stars should go mad;
Knowing this frenzy must cease
And quiet will sing to me soon.
I know that a silent laughter
Will comfort me when I am clad
In the golden apparel of sunlight,
And the silver cloths of the moon.

WRITTEN IN THE HOTEL —— MEZZANINE FLOOR

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

RESTLESSLY I move about, unable to sit quietly.
In my mind,
Impatience for the music of your voice,
Impatience for the pressure of your lips,
I wait . . . watching the clock . . . I wait. . . .

Four thousand hells! Why do I wait
When I see, here around me, a dozen prettier women.
That one, there, with the tempting mouth
That is more fetching than Pommard. Her roving eyes rest briefly on my face.
I smile. . . . A sickly smile, 'tis true. . . .
(For I am thinking of the house-detective.)
A most provoking glance speeds back to me.
And yet . . . and yet . . . I wait. . . .
For if you saw me talking to another woman,
You would tell my wife. . . .
And so . . . I wait. . . .

TO find themselves for once at least the undisputed heroes of an imaginary drama—how often does this account for the unexpected originality of commonplace people when they "fall in love"!

IT is bad taste to have too good an eye for those faults in our friends which in our enemies are fair game for ridicule.

THERE is only one way to cure a wounded heart: break it altogether.

THE NOVICE

By Maurice Lazar

UNUTTERABLE boredom obsessed the young man as he reclined disconsolately by the reading lamp and assembled scattered reflections. He had just escaped from a restaurant party which was futile and devoid of the energizing personalities he had discovered upon previous similar occasions. His excuses for his untimely departure, contemplated in the silence of his room, distressed him with their lameness. And the prospect of the unemotional hours that must be traversed the morrow, and the day after, and the day after that, made him shake his clenched fingers and curse the inutility of his existence. The sound of the telephone-bell in the adjoining room did not distract him, nor did he budge until Jeremiah entered with acquired weariness and said,

"A lady, sir."

It was the Voice of Voices that greeted him through the telephone and jerked his recalcitrant mental processes into order. He even laughed in his relief, laughed exultingly.

"Yes, it is I." She also was amused. "It's rather late. . . . *Are* you surprised?"

Her voice conveyed an exquisite vocal caress that fairly transported him; he responded to its intimacy. . . .

"I am not at home," she confessed, and he knew at once that the ardently desired opportunity was before him. His emotions drove him swiftly to the situation, although it was with difficulty that he managed to mutter:

"Where are you? . . . Shall I fetch you?"

No, no need; she was, she added slowly, at the corner drug store. And, well, you see—

"Oh, at once! You must. I shall be waiting here. Do c—" The click of the receiver cut him off, but he had become ineffably happy.

Scarcely had Jeremiah helped him to put on his coat when he hastened into the study, the room that shortly would be hallowed with her presence, and with the unseeing eyes of the expectant lover inspected the arrangement of the furnishings and the fixtures.

The few minutes before her arrival seemed interminable. As he strode up and down he cogitated the manner that should refine the quality of his greeting to his dear. If you want the truth, he was in the malaise of a love inspired not so much by woman as by the history of her. A bibliophile, and a student of the development of amatory fashions from the times of the Greek courtezans, he had, a few weeks ago, substituted the actuality for the historical. To be precise, he permitted himself to become enamoured of a comely lady, in the course of a friend's "literary dinner." A few days later he mailed her some verses that had been growing up with him during the last five years. And so the damage was done.

Soon the object of his adoration would be here with him. How wonderful is life, he reflected, and he cast disdainful glances towards the corner shelves laden with the sensuous writings of such men as Lucianus of Samosata, Lucius Apuleius, Petronius Arbiter and the Moderns. Henceforth, he swore, such spurious stuff would have no place in his life; he vowed himself forever entwined in the network of illusions of the twentieth, not the first, century.

His mind's eye conjured, with effort, the still charming if substantial figure of her who was about to establish a precedent in his life. But in visualizing the lovely creature his sense of social values compelled him to add disconcerting associations. Her tall husband's hands, he remembered, were powerfully proportioned. He fancied they presaged abnormal physical strength. An amateur adrift in the sea of social relationships, he symbolized those hands. And contemplating his own slender fingers, he accelerated his impatient promenade.

The doorbell tinkled discreetly. As in a flash it was flung open by him. She came in, hand outstretched for him, her eyes glistening through the fine meshes of her veil; eyes that were bright with perhaps the realization of adventure, the sensing of the unusual.

"What must you think of me, Eugene?" (The eternal formula.) But he was kissing her hand and a moment elapsed before he could answer.

"Blanche! Don't you see?" And he bent again over her delicately gloved fingers.

"You absurd boy." She seemed to be pleased.

Presently she was seated in his armchair, her cloak upon his table giving it an unaccustomed appearance, and he was staring at her from the footstool with a tenderness that moulded his features into a fatuous expression. She was impelled to smile at him.

"So dear of you to come!" he declaimed, and the manner of his utterance touched, yet amused her.

"Never, never did I believe that this would happen: to visit a young man in his rooms, at so late an hour; no reason, no occasion for it. Just—"

"No reason! You came because you *care* for me; because I . . . love you!" And he became inarticulate.

Humorously snapping her fingers at him she arose, and with feminine curiosity contemplated the oddities that adorned the mantel and the bookcase tops. She glanced at some of the volumes and haltingly pronounced their titles. Charmingly modulated was her voice, and a fragrant odour of perfume reached him as he observed her moving about, talking, dispelling with her individualized charms the gloomy voids in his barely tolerable quarters.

He found it hard to realize that the place was his very own, so extremely did she magnetize the value of his possessions. The doubts as to the propriety of his conduct—for never before had he attracted the interest of a woman—were made negligible before this sudden materialization of imagined, privately cherished, contacts. He was confounded.

She approached him. His hands moved forward appealingly. Stooping, she turned up his head with encircling arm and resolutely kissed his lips.

"Blanche!" he cried, conscious chiefly of an aromatic moisture upon his lips.

"I've become very fond of you, my dear. You are really a boy, but you are modest and unassertive." She had paid no attention to his cry. He thought, subconsciously, of physicians' impassiveness, and looking up found her smiling as with approval at him. She was serenely cognizant of her ten years' seniority.

"Do you know, Eugene, I marked you for my own the day we first met?"

"Three long weeks ago," he recited, and rising swiftly as if in gratitude, he attempted to embrace her.

The illusion that had drawn them together badly sustained its first cloud-prick. For Eugene discovered, thanks to the eremitic conditions in which he had passed his years, that ladies of the flesh are of the earth, earthy, and not the sprightly intriguing nymphs that fascinate the students of coloured lithographs. She was, he imagined, a little too much. And he found it hard to disguise his confusion.

He was too naive, and awkward. Better to down her vexation she turned away from him to the little table. The faded blossoms that drooped from the slender bronze vase restored her confidence in the impulse that had driven

her to visit him, for the flowers had come from her and it pleased her to see them thus still cherished, even though now they belonged to the history of last week. She hummed Drdla's *Souvenir*.

"Blanche!"

"Yes?"

He couldn't for the life of him say at that moment what he wanted so to say, but gaining courage from her thoughtful gaze, he ventured to put his arm carefully about her neck, and then flustered his words into her ear:

"I love you so! It is simply superb of you to have come here. I was so lonely."

"Poor dear. I shall have to look after you." The minor cadence of her voice was touched with an irony that did not escape his anxious attention.

"Blanche, tell me, have I offended you?"

"What a question!"

"I feel as though I have annoyed you. You will forgive me if I am indiscreet. You see, I—" He gesticulated in his efforts to explain his position. "I never loved a woman before."

The admission was successful. Her appreciative smile bowled him over with its infectiousness and sincerity. She believed his statement one of fact; had herself suspected as much.

"Flatterer," she cried, and maternally pinched his cheek.

They haunted the cushioned window-seat together. Gradually their talk became haphazard, their infrequent caresses mechanical, their moments of silence oppressive. Her disinterest was proving too much for him, although she felt it due him to remain kind so long as would be humanly possible.

Pointing with wearily curved finger at the little volume that lay beside the vase with her lifeless flowers, she asked him to read to her. The book was Franz Blei's *Von Amoureusen Frauen*. She was very thoughtful when he finished reading the provocative introduction and silently regarded the reproduced portraits of Marguerite de Valois, Pierre de Brantôme, Catharine de Medici, the unfortunate Mary Stuart, Marion Delorme, the Lady Hamilton. . . .

She was consumed, in a measure, with curiosity as to what he would do or say. Having conducted himself like a veritable cat's-mouse, she (figuratively) was bent upon sharpening her claws. He was to be spared no mercy, for even her desperate suggestion of Franz Blei as first-aid to the fainthearted had fallen upon fallow soil. Came his unexpected, ponderously delivered observation:

"What those women accomplished!"

"Accomplished. *Did*, rather! Beware, fond lover, I too may be your undoing." She glanced at her wrist-watch.

"How wonderfully happy I should be!" he cried; but his enthusiasm was stressed. Franz Blei had innocently diverted his attention into metaphysical channels of reflection. In a singular reaction to his thoughts, and subconscious of the effort, he unpremeditatedly kissed her. Her sudden outright laugh brought him back sharply to the realities of the present. He was so utterly confused that she couldn't help laughing again.

"Go on, talk, my innocent child! Talk, or just think."

"You divine my thoughts." He was pensive.

"As if they were printed words, Eugene."

He left her side to pace the carpeted floor and said not a word as she picked up her hat and secured it firmly.

"Eugene!"

"Oh, must you go, dear? Forgive me. . . . Must it be now?"

She nodded and held out her cloak. His nervous fingers smoothed the cloth around her shoulders. She faced him calmly, and drawing her veil over her eyes, said cheerfully:

"A taxi for your . . . maternal friend."

The young man pressed the button and hastening to the door opened it sufficiently to communicate the com-

mand to Jeremiah. He came back and confronted her determinedly.

"And this is the end?"

"Oh, my dear, my husband is frightfully jealous!"

"Tell me."

"He's stubborn, too, Eugene. In fact, overwhelming. I can't help but attend his slightest wish. It is comfortable, at times; but he is not the dear, innocent boy"—she sighed—"that you must always be."

They moved slowly to the door and she held out her gloved hand. "Goodbye, my friend."

It is a fact that he was beginning to cry, and that she was ready to shout with laughter. But it is true also that she did draw him close to her and kiss his forehead, before she departed.

A WALK IN SPRINGTIME

By Marguerite Wilkinson

CURLY were the ferns
And cool was the brook
When my love and I
Went out to look;
But when we had seen
We did not look again,
For the love in our eyes
Was blinding, like rain.

Soft was the sun
Where the trees gave space—
Warmer were his lips
Upon my face,
And the wood was sweet
In the spring of the year,
But lovelier by far
He was—my dear!

Little pearly flowers,
Pearly rose and blue,
Blossomed where we passed,—
We scarcely knew
That the air was still—
That the earth was kind—
For love in our hearts
Was blowing like the wind!

ENOUGH ROPE

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

ELEANORA TRIPPINGTON learned unexpectedly that her husband was being attentive to another woman. She dismissed the information with a laughing remark about "the poor fish," the appellative being directed toward Frederick V. Trippington and not toward his unknown siren. Later, Eleanora thought it over and it displeased her. Also, it seemed entirely too likely to be true.

The Trippingtons had been married for sixteen years. Eleanora had been twenty-seven when she married, though she had acknowledged only twenty-four of these years, and Frederick had been about the same age. Up to now, Eleanora had been rather proud of her married life. She had been the daughter of a poor bookkeeper and Frederick had been a chemist's clerk. For two years after their marriage they had lived in an almost invisible apartment in the Bronx. Eleanora had done her own work. She liked to refer now, in private, to the way she had struggled during those years of poverty. Eleanora had really worked less hard than before her marriage when she had helped her mother with more complicated housework. She had never particularly exerted herself, nor had she ever expected much more than that Bronx flat.

Then Frederick, who, up to that time had been plain Fred, invented a cleaning formula, had it patented and started introducing it to the trade. Almost overnight the production of it had grown to where he had to rent a whole building for its manufacture. Then a man he knew had given him the idea for the odd triangular bottle, and, before he realized it, Frederick was the owner of Clean-O and the immense Clean-O factories, with the exception of a few decorative mortgages which he could have paid off any day he had a mind to.

Frederick grew up to his responsibilities. He lost a little hair and he gained a pompous manner and some flesh in the process. He was a pleasant little fellow, with a round, rather rosy face and reddish hair.

Eleanora grew up to her responsibilities, too. The Bronx apartment became, by gradual stages, a whole house on East Seventy-fifth Street. There was a country place, too, and seven servants and two cars. Eleanora had even succeeded in getting into a kind of "society," composed of people of equal—and even greater—wealth, who had likewise risen by the invention or discovering of other helps to mankind. There were the Farletys—"Pepsin-Celery Stomach Bitters," the Elliotts—mail order jewelry, "Buy your watch our way, a dime a day," and the Grindleys—moving picture houses. If Eleanora, even now, had her eye on a set one step higher up, ruled by Mrs. Morris Ternison, wife of the furniture manufacturer—"set up your own furniture at home"—there were, in turn, dozens of eager inferior ones who envied Eleanora's "social position."

Eleanora at forty-three—forty, that is—wasn't at all bad looking. She was almost a head taller than Frederick. Because of her added weight—she had gone from the ridiculously small amount of one hundred and thirty to

one hundred and eighty-five pounds—she appeared even taller than she was. She could have kept her weight down, perhaps, but she hated dieting—it just happened in her exceptional case that all the things she liked to eat belonged on the forbidden list. She followed the "Eat and Grow Thin" menus for a whole week once but didn't lose but a pound, so that really wasn't worth while following. She looked quite nice when she didn't lose her breath by going upstairs too fast. She had a lot of hair—it had grown a few shades lighter during the years, henna rinse is so good for one—and rather light blue eyes. She hadn't "let herself go" as so many married women do. Indeed, she rather prided herself because she kept up—manicures and massages—her own maid could do these things for her now—and expensive corsets. She had always felt so sure of herself—and of Frederick. And now—

She had heard the appalling news that afternoon. She had met a group of "the girls" at the Biltmore for luncheon. She had been a little late and they stopped talking, too suddenly, when they saw her.

"Is it my suit you don't like?" she had asked, simpering. The suit was new.

"Your suit is charming, my dear," some one had answered and then some rather forced talk filled in the pause. Eleanora looked unsatisfied, inquiring.

Mrs. Elliott had been the one, at last.

"Eleanora is no fool," she said. "She probably knows a lot more about it all than we do. We were just remarking that we saw your husband going into lunch with a little charmer in black."

Rose Elliott was little and sallow and had a wide mouth. She laughed rather spitefully as she waited to see the effect.

Eleanora was a trifle red. Perhaps it was the result of walking so fast from the carriage entrance.

"My dear," she said, and gasped. Then, "Oh, that! The poor fish," and then something about, "let's not lunch in the room they're in, it might spoil their party."

The others had laughed at the way she took things. She hoped she had got away with it all right, even if slang had pierced the thin coating of her culture.

II

Now, at home, a few hours later, Eleanora was trying to think it all out. Here, all this time, she had felt so sure of herself. She had supposed she knew Frederick awfully well. She had seen him, except when he had been away on brief business trips, every day for the past sixteen years. He spent almost all of his evenings with her—either at home or at the theatre, or at the movies—they both thought them a lot of fun—or with friends.

On the other evenings, Eleanora had always taken it for granted that Frederick was at his office or at his club—he belonged to two clubs, only one of them was rather commercial. And he had probably been with another woman all this time!

From the way the girls acted, Eleanora felt that it wasn't th first they had heard of the affair. Like, with all other people, it was probably her, the poor, trusting little wife, who had learned about things last of all. Surely there was some way out of it. There must be.

It wasn't that Eleanora loved Frederick. Even when she married him she had not been completely swayed by affection, and sixteen years are certainly enough to dull even fairly warm emotions. Eleanora had married Frederick because she was twenty—rather, *in* her twenties and other lovers seemed shadowy. A chemist's clerk and a Bronx flat are better than single blessedness. When money had come she had accepted it as her just and rightful due. She felt she had never been extravagant—she had always been thoughtful, considerate, kind. Even now, didn't she quit going with people and stay away from a whole lot of

places just because Frederick didn't care about them?

She never looked at another man. It didn't occur to Eleanora in adding this to her virtues that it might have been, just a trifle, because men never looked at her. She was not the type that attracts masculine attention, so she was very proud of her faithfulness. She had thought Frederick as true as herself—and all this time—

Was this Frederick's first affair? Was he really fond of this woman? How long had it gone on? All she knew was that Frederick was taking another woman out to luncheons—and he never could find time to have luncheon with her—it was terrible.

Eleanora felt she couldn't do without Frederick. How could she do without him? What if he eloped with this girl? It was unthinkable. What if he—provided an apartment for her? That was nearly as bad. Eleanora knew she must hold Frederick. Her "social position"—her ambitions—demanded it. What could a woman do without a man? She had to admit that, perhaps, she couldn't very well get another, at least not another as good as Frederick. As good as he had been, anyhow. He had given her everything she wanted. She had thought him a bit annoying at times, perhaps, but, he was, after all, so much better than most women's husbands. He was rich—and not at all bad looking—and he was hers.

Of course, she could divorce him, but she didn't want a divorce. That would be the thing to do. That would teach him a lesson. But Eleanora didn't want to be known as a divorced woman—a woman who couldn't hold her husband, whose husband had cared more for another woman.

Besides, being a woman alone was a pretty awful thing at forty. She didn't have anything else she was interested in. She had seen a lot of women alone—no one to go places with in the evenings, no one to depend on, always being an odd one at dinner or having to be looked out for specially—or left out altogether. There was no fun in that. She didn't know of a single man who would care to be nice to her, not one. She was rather fat—she had to admit it—and her chin, while not exactly double, wasn't as slender as it had been. No, if she were left alone, life would be pretty empty.

Money—she could get that—alimony. But, even alimony isn't the same as all the money you wanted. Besides, Frederick had said business was worse, lately, nothing much—Frederick always had Clean-O on his mind—but some of the ingredients were hard to get now and awfully expensive and the people wouldn't pay a higher price for it and even the cost of manufacturing the special bottles had gone up. Oh, they weren't going to be poor, but it certainly would mean a small amount of alimony. Nothing like that! Eleanora wanted her home and her servants and her cars—and her man—she'd keep them, too.

She thought about it the next few days and wept a few tears at night when she was alone in her near-Louis Sixteenth bedroom. There must be a way to solve things—to get Frederick back. Other women did—if she could only be clever enough to think of something—

She watched Frederick closely. He seemed just like always, his little round head partly bald, partly covered with reddish hair, his little bright eyes, his round, red face, his ears, slightly high, a bit prominent. Surely, she could hold him!

Frederick spent the evenings with Eleanora as always. He was his own pleasant little self, smiling, pompous, good natured. Could it be possible that he . . .

III

A WEEK passed and Eleanora saw—with her own eyes. It was at the Plaza this time. She was going to meet Mrs. Craig Fenton and her niece for tea and was quite excited about it—the Craig Fentons—coal—represented social superiority.

In her newest coat and hat, Eleanora sat in the lobby, waiting for them, but, before they arrived—Frederick did. He was with The Other Woman. Smiling, beaming at her, Frederick escorted his "friend" into the tea-room He hadn't seen Eleanora.

Eleanora had to admit The Siren was pretty. She was little, not nearly as tall as Frederick, and she had dark hair and much-rouged cheeks and a little white powdered nose. No doubt a silly little thing. And Frederick had fallen for her. Something must be done about it!

Eleanora was still confused when Mrs. Fenton and her niece arrived. She made excuses about being tired of the Plaza—such a mixed crowd here to-day—and before her friends knew what she was about she had them over at the Savoy. She disliked the Savoy, usually.

That night she wanted to tell Frederick what she had seen. Something kept her from it. The next day it was too late to go back to it. What could she do?

Every day Eleanora felt she ought to do something. She began looking for Evidence. One always found things, in the plays and movies and in the magazines. She looked through all of Frederick's coat pockets. He was very discreet. She found nothing in any of them. She looked through the desk in his den, reading dozens of letters. As far as she could tell not one was written in code nor was from a woman.

Eleanora got Frederick's mail before he did in the morning. One day she kept one letter out and steamed it over a pot of tea when she was alone. She felt dreadfully ashamed. The letter turned out to be a request for funds for a negro school—they had used rather a feminine envelope. Eleanora almost cried with exasperation.

She found nothing in the days that passed.

Not finding things didn't make any difference. She knew—her friends knew—the affair wasn't something she had imagined. Frederick was pretty deep to keep things quiet. But, even if he hadn't—that wouldn't have settled things. She must get Frederick back, get him to drop that girl.

Eleanora thought of making Frederick jealous, even attempted it, half-heartedly. She'd let him see her about to open a letter. At his approach, she'd turn away as if to hide it. Frederick paid no attention to this. One day a letter, addressed to her, was lying on the table. As Frederick approached, Eleanora pretended to be embarrassed and grabbed for it. The letter fell on the floor. Frederick glanced at it idly, turning it over as he returned it. Then:

"Eleanora, if I were you, I wouldn't give anything to those people. They sent me a letter, too—I happened to remember the envelope. I think it's one of those fake charity schemes where the collector keeps most of the funds."

She didn't try that again, though she did try, unsuccessfully, to make Frederick jealous in other ways. She wore enormous bunches of orchids or violets and tried to glance at them coyly. One day Frederick noticed a particularly large corsage. Her heart almost skipped a beat. He said:

"What is the matter with you lately, Eleanora? You seem to be wasting so much money foolishly. You know I'm not one to complain, usually, but this month the florist sent your bill to the office and it was awfully big, it seems to me."

Eleanora gathered around her what unattached men she could find, but it was rather a sad group and brought home to her how much she would miss Frederick if she should lose him. Oh, he mustn't leave her! There must be some way! The men were a young, penniless fellow who made a pretence of appreciating pictures and could flatter a little, though he only flattered after he had had an especially good meal or a seat at the theatre; a tall, morose young man who did something in a publishing house and spoke distantly about literature; the younger brother of Mrs. Elliott, a Mr. Tolkins,

who sold real estate and gave long winded opinions about the arts of which he knew as little as possible.

Eleanora was almost glad that these did not succeed in making Frederick jealous or she would have had to have them around all the time. She would have enjoyed the company of a man who was attractive and attracted, who was interesting, charming. These parasites who attracted so many of her women friends did not appeal to her. The sort of man she would have liked evidently did not see any attractions in a large, not especially dignified nor clever woman in her early forties. So, jealousy wouldn't work.

Then, one night, suddenly, a real solution came to Eleanora, she felt sure.

Eleanora and Frederick and Mr. and Mrs. Elliott, after dining at the Elliotts', came down town in the Elliotts' car. It was too late for the theatre—Eleanora liked to be in time to see the curtain go up, when she went to a show—so someone suggested the movies.

They went to a new, gaily decorated picture theatre. Eleanora liked it. She listened interestedly to the huge pipe organ and laughed at the comic. Then came the feature picture—"One Woman's Answer." The scenario writer had evidently read "Divorçons" and "A Woman's Way" with both application and profit. The story was about a rich woman who had a rival. "How similar," thought Eleanora. She hated her rival and planned out to get rid of her. Finally she found a way. She invited her rival to her home, let the rival see the husband every day, threw the rival at his head. In the end, sick of the strange woman and her designing ways, the husband returned to his dear wife and everlasting happiness.

Eleanora gave Mrs. Elliott's hand a little squeeze. She felt very happy. She had indeed discovered a method.

"If he'd only see enough of that little black-haired devil, he'd get sick of her sure enough," she thought. "He'll see how superior I am. Why hadn't I thought of that before? I'll manage things all right. I'll show him. Just as that picture says—give a man enough rope and he'll hang himself. I'll give him enough rope, all he wants. I'll show him up and show up the girl—she's probably after his money—and then he'll come back fast enough."

IV

THE first thing was to meet the girl. You can't cultivate a woman unless you're at least slightly acquainted with her. Eleanora spent days trying to meet That Woman. She haunted the tea-rooms and restaurants she thought her husband might frequent, hoping to find them together, so that she could get an introduction.

"And," she thought, "when I find them, I won't make a scene. I'll surprise him. He'll expect a scene and he won't know what's up. I'll invite her to the house. Then we'll see."

Luck was with Eleanora in her desire to get acquainted with her rival. One day she called at the Clean-O offices to see Frederick. To her surprise, waiting in her husband's outer office, she found The Rival, herself. So—Frederick was that bold! He let her come right into his business office! All the employees knew about it then. They were all laughing at the poor, deceived wife, no doubt.

Frederick had an important business engagement, would be at leisure in a few minutes, his secretary said.

Eleanora didn't mind waiting. She sat down opposite her rival. The girl was a pretty little thing, undoubtedly quite stupid. Hadn't she read some place that girls with long eyelashes were invariably lacking in brains? She had been glad, at the time, that her eyelashes weren't remarkably full. The girl's lashes were long and curled. Eleanora contributed each month to the Girls' Rescue Club and had learned all about girls with long, curled lashes at the one meeting she had attended during the winter.

The girl wasn't badly dressed. Her clothes were cheap—maybe Frederick

wasn't paying for them after all. Maybe she'd be in time to nip things in the bud. Pretty smart. The girl had on a straight sailor with a wide ribbon around the crown and a little black suit. Eleanora decided the girl was a deep one, because her gloves were clean. Poor girls don't have clean, white gloves. Who was the girl, anyway?

Eleanora walked over toward her. She'd have to get acquainted before Frederick came in.

"I'm Mrs. Trippington," Eleanora said and smiled her heartiest. How she hated the little thing! But she'd have to appear friendly, if she wanted to play the game. "I've seen you so often that I feel I ought to know you."

The little thing stood up, blushed and stammered out, "I'm pleased to meet you."

Eleanora was glad to find out she didn't have good manners—her own few graces had been attained with much difficulty. It would be easy enough to show up this girl.

Frederick Trippington opened the door of his private office and saw them standing there. Eleanora smiled a bit triumphantly. She saw Frederick start, step back, grow red, embarrassed, then step forward to meet her.

"You—you know Miss Morgan, Eleanora?" he asked.

He acted very guilty and confused, Eleanora thought.

"I've just introduced myself," said Eleanora and waited. Then, "I've seen Miss Morgan a number of times."

She remembered that she didn't want a scene—that she wanted to be friendly, so she smiled at both of them. If there ever was a guilty couple, though, it was Frederick and Miss Morgan. She was sure of that.

Frederick stammered something, then seemed to find himself.

"Miss Morgan is posing for the new Clean-O advertisements," he said. "Have you seen them?"

He took a portfolio out of a desk and brought it to Eleanora. She opened it. There was Miss Morgan—"The Clean-O girl," showing how to take spots out of things, dressed in spotted and unspotted garments, dressed in a Clean-O uniform and in evening clothes.

"They are quite charming," said Eleanora.

So, that's how Frederick met her. A model!

"It's the first time I've ever posed," said Miss Morgan, perkily. "I'm—I'm with 'The Strawberry Girl,' in the chorus. I was recommended to Mr. Trippington by a friend of his. Everyone seems to think the pictures are all right."

A chorus girl! Worse than she had suspected. She had found out about things just in time. Frederick was a fool. Why, the girl would work him for thousands—anything.

Frederick had made his explanations. Evidently he was waiting now to see what Eleanora would do. What she did probably surprised him.

"If you haven't an engagement, Miss Morgan, won't you come to lunch with me?" she asked.

Evidently quite pleased, Miss Morgan accepted. She didn't talk much going down in the elevator nor in the car nor at the tea-room. A sly one!

It was Saturday and Miss Morgan had a matinée, so Eleanora drove her to the stage entrance and when she left the car, Miss Morgan had promised to come to tea at the Trippingtons' the next day. Eleanora felt she couldn't start any too soon. She'd make Frederick awfully tired of this girl.

V

Miss Morgan came to the Trippington home on Sunday. Eleanora hadn't told Frederick about the invitation, though she had insisted that he stay at home. It pleased Eleanora to see how amazed he looked when Miss Morgan came in.

She looked quite pretty. Eleanora had to admit that. It was early summer and she wore a plain blue dress with a big white collar. She had on

quite a lot of rouge. Eleanora felt that she, herself, was not so bad looking. She wasn't rouged so ridiculously. Her gown was a "creation" of satin and chiffon, you simply couldn't compare the two.

She greeted Miss Morgan warmly.

"Come and tuck your things away, dear," she said. "I'm going to call you by your first name if you don't mind. What is your first name, dear?"

"It's Dorothy," said Miss Morgan.

Dorothy Morgan made quite an impression on several of Eleanora's young men who dropped in. There are so few places to go on Sunday. At first, Dorothy seemed embarrassed, but soon she was giggling at nothing, eating innumerable little sandwiches and cakes. Eleanora remembered how Frederick hated giggles!

The tea passed off better than most things Eleanora gave. It was a novelty to have a young, pretty girl and the guests were quite pleased with her. Dorothy played a little and sang a few popular songs in an affected, rather sharp voice. She insisted on feeding the men, making them "beg" for bits of cake. At first she had been afraid of Eleanora, had eyed her before attempting to do any cunning little tricks. But Eleanora smiled encouragingly. She knew these were just the kinds of things Frederick despised. How glad Eleanora was that Dorothy was playing so cleverly into her hand.

Twice during the next week, Dorothy was a dinner guest at the Trippingtons'. Each time she sat next to Frederick. At the first dinner there were five other guests and Dorothy was a little quiet, as if she were not used to things. Eleanora liked that. She'd show Frederick what an ordinary little thing Dorothy really was. Her other guests had been chosen so that Dorothy would suffer when Frederick compared them. At the second dinner, Dorothy had gained her composure. She "made eyes" at Frederick. She giggled and tossed her head.

"Disgusting," thought Eleanora. The tricks that youth uses are doubly impertinent to forty. Eleanora tried to show Frederick her disapproval without risking Dorothy's displeasure—she couldn't afford to get Dorothy angry, that would spoil things. Toward the end of the evening Eleanora could tell that Frederick was beginning to be annoyed because he deliberately left Dorothy and devoted himself to his men guests.

The next week Dorothy was again invited twice for dinner. There were no other guests these times and Eleanora felt sure that, after this, Frederick would be quite tired of her.

Dorothy chatted through both the dinners, told about what the girls had said in the dressing-room and the lovely flowers Tessie Gail got every night, about the benefit matinée she had attended and the fête in which the chorus had been asked to take part.

Eleanora knew that this talk bored Frederick. Didn't he always ask her to stop, when she told him a lot of things that had happened during the day—and about people he knew, too—and, of course, it is more interesting to hear about people you know than about girls in a chorus.

A night or so after the last dinner, on their way home from the theatre, Frederick said, suddenly, to Eleanora.

"Why are you entertaining little Miss Morgan so much, anyhow?"

Eleanora smiled, enigmatically, she thought.

"Why, don't you like her, dear?"

"Oh, yes, quite a nice little thing, only I just wondered. You usually don't care for young girls."

"This is different."

That would give Frederick something to think about.

"It's rather amusing to have a young person around, occasionally, don't you think so?"

She looked closely at his face as he answered.

But Frederick was evidently listening to a knock in the engine and just said, "Yes, yes, indeed," a bit impatiently. But Eleanora thought she saw his round, ruddy face grow a bit redder.

He was evidently tired to death of Dorothy Morgan.

Eleanora wanted to make a complete job of it. She'd leave no small regrets, no wishes to see Dorothy again. It meant a great deal to her and she wanted it settled for always. The moving picture had been right, of course. She had given Frederick a lot of rope, but not enough. She wanted him to get tangled up in it completely and come to her and explain his error, or to show up the girl so Frederick would see her real nature, or she wanted him to get so tired that he'd beg her never to let him see Dorothy again. Any way, he'd "hang himself" with it.

It was up to her to see that the job was complete.

VI

THE Trippingtons opened their home in Westchester County a week later, as they always did about that time ever since they had owned a home in Westchester County. It was a big house, planted imposingly on a hill, with little needless minarets and towers to add to its grandeur. Eleanora liked to think of it as "an estate" and was very proud of owning it. They had bought it already furnished and had added elaborate and poorly done tapestries and some grotesque carved and inlaid furniture. Eleanora thought it very elegant.

A week after the Trippingtons went out to "Hillcrest," Eleanora stopped at Dorothy's boarding-house and found that "The Strawberry Girl" had closed for the season. It was all coming out just right! She insisted that Dorothy come out to the country with her, even helping her pack her few clothes into a small theatrical trunk, which the chauffeur carried right down to the car. She wouldn't take a chance of letting Dorothy get away.

Eleanora never took breakfast with Frederick. She had found that it annoyed him to talk—he preferred drinking his coffee and reading his paper in silence. She did not tell her guest this, of course. She was delighted to find that Dorothy had come into the dining-room just before Frederick, had inquired about the breakfast hour, had waited for him—they had breakfasted together and Dorothy had chatted all during the meal. Eleanora could almost see Frederick's pompous smile of annoyance. It was coming out pretty fine!

When Frederick returned in the evening, there was Dorothy Morgan again. After dinner in the library, there was Dorothy, chatting, chatting about nothing. She'd put a record on the phonograph in the midst of Frederick's reading. She'd insist on dancing when he was almost falling asleep in his chair. Dorothy would ask Eleanora to dance, too, but Eleanora declined. She knew she was a bit heavy, perhaps. There was no use inviting comparisons.

She was glad, though, of some comparisons. Frederick could see how elegantly she dressed—how good-looking her gowns were compared to the cheap little ready-mades Dorothy Morgan wore. He couldn't help noticing, too, her dignity and composure—she had spent years cultivating them—compared to the chattering, flighty, silly little chorus girl. After this lesson, Frederick would be willing to settle down at home, minus outside feminine companionship as a man of his age ought rightly to do.

There was not much business at the office and Frederick came home about three in the afternoon. The car met him at the station. Eleanora noticed that usually Dorothy managed to hop into the car just as it left to meet the train. Eleanora had done this, occasionally, other years, but she found Trippington was not very good company when he returned hot and tired from a day in the city and that he preferred being alone. Making herself even more impossible, sometimes Dorothy insisted that Frederick walk home—a long half-mile of rough, up-hill pathway. Dorothy couldn't have acted better if Eleanora had drilled her. How Frederick hated walking! And, some-

times, after they returned, Dorothy insisted on a game of tennis before dinner. Eleanora knew that she and Frederick were too old for such things. To show Frederick what a real lady would do, Eleanora, clad in an elaborate afternoon gown, walked about the grounds with slow dignity. Just let Frederick compare her with this little Miss Nothing of the chorus.

Frederick was pretty well tired out by now, Eleanora knew. Dorothy was quite a task to entertain. She insisted on doing things, going places. Eleanora was always tired, these days. After all, forty can't do all the things twenty finds enjoyable. At least Dorothy said she was twenty, twenty-five most likely. But, if Eleanora was tired, Frederick must be tired, too. That was a real consolation. Not in years had Frederick been dragged about like this. Soon, he'd come and "be off." Eleanora knew that.

Eleanora arranged to have little lunches ready, so that Dorothy and Frederick could take longer walks in the neighbourhood. Sunday, she planned that they take a long motor ride, and, at the last minute pleaded a headache so that Dorothy and Frederick had to go without her.

Another week went on. To her delight, Eleanora saw that Frederick actually began to avoid Dorothy. He went to his room several times after dinner. He refused some of the walks in the woods, some of the tennis games. He seemed annoyed, worried, even at meal times. Eleanora grew radiant at her success. She would be able to hold Frederick—keep her "social position," her money, her constant escort. Frederick was safe.

The next week-end Eleanora invited several house-guests. Frederick must see what a splendid hostess she was, must compare her to Dorothy and Dorothy's silliness. He must see, too, how foolish his second-childhood actions would look to him, if his old friends were present.

The guests arrived on Saturday, and, to make the affair a gay one, a "Jazz" band arrived for the evening. They were quite lively with dancing and drinking, though with a grown-up gaiety, in which Eleanora could take a leading part. Then Dorothy did a special dance and Eleanora was glad when Frederick looked annoyed at the stupid little costume. Dorothy had made it out of an old dress Eleanora had given her.

The guests slept late on Sunday, there was a heavy dinner at three and a picnic in the wooded part of the estate, late in the afternoon. Eleanora saw that Frederick avoided Dorothy all the afternoon. He talked to Rose Elliott instead! She breathed a sigh of contentment. She felt that her work was complete—she could send Dorothy away.

The guests, all but Dorothy, left on Monday. Another week of Dorothy would be served as a final dose—so there could be no possible relapse. At the end of the week Frederick seemed actually to have lost weight. His ruddy face was almost pale—it couldn't have been the heat altogether. His thin, reddish hair seemed thinner than ever and a new line appeared between his eyes. Still, Dorothy teased him and dared him to run races, chatted and giggled. Surely, it was cruel to keep this up any longer.

So, the next day, Eleanora suggested, with what she thought to be admirable tact, that her guest return to the city. She felt that she had earned real rest and quiet—and—as for Frederick—she could only imagine how grateful he would be.

Dorothy said she would leave the next day and told what a good time she had had—giggled and acted unusually silly, Eleanora thought. Perhaps the girl was no siren, after all, just a foolish little thing who hadn't even appreciated the opportunity of an outing at "Hillcrest." Perhaps, even, Dorothy was tired of Frederick, too. After all, Frederick wasn't so young, either.

Eleanora felt that Frederick gave a sigh of real satisfaction and relief,

when, at dinner, he found that Dorothy was going away the next day.

VII

In the morning, Eleanora knocked at her guest's room to tell her good-bye. There was no answer. She knocked again. Then she opened the door. The room had already been put in order. The little cheap trunk was gone. Why, Dorothy had taken the early train and evidently hadn't wanted to disturb her. She had supposed that Dorothy would go in with Frederick on a later train. Perhaps Dorothy was even too tired of Frederick for that. Eleanora found a little note on the dresser. It was rather puzzling:

"Dear Mrs. Trippington (she read):

"*I know this won't surprise you. I'd like to know if you planned it or what. Anyhow, it's the best way, it seems to me. Ta-ta, and thank you.*

"Dorothy Morgan."

She'd show Frederick the note. He was still in his room, of course. She'd like to talk the whole affair over with him.

There was no response to her knock at Frederick's door, either. She knocked louder. With a little presentiment of something wrong, she turned the knob. The door opened.

Frederick's room was in disorder. The bed was unmade. The closet door was open. Several pairs of shoes stood near it. Some clothes were lying across the bed and on one of the chairs. What was the matter?

Eleanora walked to the mammoth, elaborately carved dresser. There, as she had feared, stuck between two useless silver brushes, was another note. Her hand trembled as she held the paper.

"Dear Eleanor:

"*Dorothy and I left this morning for California. It seemed the best way for all concerned. I may be an old fool, but everyone can have his own opinion about that. Anyhow, it's done.*

"*Dorothy says she knows that you planned this or you wouldn't have thrown us together this way. If that's so, it's all right. She must be right because before you had her out to the house I had just seen her at the office a few times and only had her out to lunch three or four times when I was arranging for the Clean-O pictures. But, when I saw her out at the house and all of her cute little ways, I saw how much I was missing. I'm not an old man yet by a long way, and I like a little fun and I know you like more of a quiet life, so I guess we are all better off. I've been trying to get over the way I feel about Dorothy, lately, but seeing her all the time, it was impossible.*

"*Clean-O hasn't done well this year, so I've sold it out and most of the other things. Garrison has charge of everything and he'll tell you about getting a divorce and a settlement. There will be enough money for you to live all right, not as much as you've been spending, but more than any of your folks have got.*

"*Dorothy has signed with the Quadruple Film Company, so I'll probably buy some property and stay out in Cal. Hope you don't take this too hard, but I guess you've been seeing which way the wind blows.*

"Frederick V. Trippington."

Holding on to the paper, Eleanora sat down on the bed. She began to laugh hysterically. So—this had happened. And here she was forty and alone. And she had tried—so awfully hard. She had tried to—what was it?—oh, yes, to give him enough rope to hang himself. She sank into a fat heap on the unmade bed. Enough rope—enough—give a man enough rope and he'll get away.

THE VOICE OF GOD

By Deems Veiller

HER name was Gabrielle, but she was no angel. She didn't even believe in God. They, the other servants, were talking about her in the kitchen.

"What I would like to know," said Higgins, "is who the man may be."

Higgins was a gossip and he relished a dish of tea with Theresa, who was a rare, intelligent woman. She'd been in France. *Omelette confiture* was as nothing to her, and every time there were artichokes for dinner she scolded the grocer boy because they were not as large as the artichokes that she could buy for one *centime* in Paris.

Theresa's first husband had been an officer in Constantinople, and she could make Turkish sweetmeats. Theresa's present husband was a musician. She was a rare woman and she could cook. She was religious, too. She never missed church. She had the air of being on intimate terms with God.

"Who the man is—that is as may be. God alone knows," said Theresa, mysteriously, hugging her fat arms.

"Not much of a man," sniffed Annie, who was jealous.

"She was a pale-faced hussy," said Katie, who was of no particular social standing and came in to do the washing. "And so innocent she looked!"

Katie drank her tea standing by the wash-tub; she was hardly one of this below-stairs family; she only came in to do washing by the day.

"I wonder who the man might be," repeated Higgins. He had liked the pale-faced hussy.

"I don't believe she knew herself," said Annie, pettishly tying on a little dotted Swiss apron with ruffles. Higgins' attitude riled her.

"I always said she would come to no good with that heathenish way of her." Katie wrung out the master's linen. Katie was a good Roman Catholic and went to confession. Annie crossed herself too.

"Poor lamb," said Theresa, wiping her eyes with her apron, "she did not know God." Theresa was an orthodox Greek Catholic. She went to the gaudy Greek church at six o'clock every morning, and whispered little sins to the young priest with the good face. Theresa crossed herself elaborately.

"She was not a religious one," admitted Higgins, sadly; he was an Episcopalian. Katie took a swallow of tea and began the Madam's silk stockings. "But the way she used to tilt back her white throat and sing like a robin; it was sweet."

"She *had* a white throat," mused Higgins. "She was a pretty slip of a girl."

"I saw nothing so pretty about her with her great brown eyes and her little thin hands and her pale little mouth," said Annie crossly.

"Poor lamb"—this was from Theresa.

"And the cruel way the Madam put her out." Katie took another swallow of tea.

"What else could the Madam do when she found out?" Higgins blew his nose. He had been fond of Gabrielle. "I wonder where she is now."

Annie looked at him sharply. "The place for a girl that isn't respectable is the river."

Annie said this with an air of inso-

lent virtue; she smoothed her apron. She mightn't be as young as she once was, but no one could say about her—

"And that way she had of running off to the country of a Sunday instead of going to church like respectable folk. Maybe she met him in the country."

"She's past the saving now," crooned Katie from the wash-tubs, starting a new tack.

Theresa was a woman of character; she spoke in monosyllables, when she did they listened. She earned sixty dollars a month. The oracle uncrossed her fat arms and spoke.

"God's will," said she.

"You talk of her in the past like as if she was dead," said Higgins, taking his tea-cup over to the kitchen sink.

"She's as good as dead," answered Annie spitefully.

She wasn't dead. She was standing outside in the area; her nose was pressed flat against the window pane and she was looking in. They were drinking tea. She could tell they were talking about her by the mean look on Annie's face, and there was Katie not attending to the washing.

Now they were talking about God; she could see them all making the sign of the cross. Silly the fuss they made about it. She couldn't understand—and how they poked in stuffy churches, and how they mumbled little words to little beads. She must go in and ask for help; she must listen to the pious mutterings of Theresa and feel the angry look of Annie on her. She didn't want to go in but she knew she would.

Her shoes were worn grey at the toe, and the feather that had once waved gay in her hat, hung down her back, long and discouraged, like the tail of a defeated dog. A hat-pin and a little patience will put the curl in an ostrich feather—any woman can do it, and when she doesn't it means that she has stopped caring. Gabrielle had stopped caring.

There was a queer look of apathy about her as she stood in the area, looking in the basement window. In her eyes and all about her hung a look of incredulous anguish, a patient numb look, sadder than despair, a look of pain sunk in stupor. Sometimes deserted women have that look. Gabrielle was a deserted woman. That's why she had lost her place, that's why she was back again, too. There wasn't any other place.

The shadows under her eyes were purple and her hair was brittle with neglect. The hot flavour of tea stole out to her. She lifted her arm and pulled the basement bell. There was a weariness in the droop of her neck and a tired line about her pink crinkled mouth. They didn't answer the bell; they were talking about God in there, and there was hot tea.

"Was that the bell?" asked Theresa.

Higgins went to the gate. He backed away when he saw the girl, but he left the gate open. He came back into the kitchen. "It's she," he said. Then he went heavily upstairs to the pantry; he had his silver to polish.

"Are you going to let the likes of her in this kitchen?" Annie wanted to know.

"I'm in," said Gabrielle monotonously. Then Annie went upstairs to the pantry. She had her dishes to wash.

Katie gave her a cup of tea. "God save your soul," she said. Then the red kitchen table-cloth became blurred. Gabrielle lay back in the kitchen rocker. She was listlessly conscious that Theresa and Katie in a far corner of the kitchen were having a hushed quarrel. The clock struck the half-hour, and she knew that the whispers would cease, because it was Theresa's time for Vespers and she never missed it. Even now she was fumbling with her bonnet strings. Now and then a sentence bit into Gabrielle's consciousness with a sensation of pain. "It all comes of her running off to the country o' Sundays instead of going to church like decent folk," and then Theresa—"God will save her." Then more soft whisperings. Theresa again, "The good priest will help her." She was almost dozing. She heard the agonized creak of tearing silk. Theresa was fiercely tying

her bonnet strings. It was late. Then Gabrielle felt herself being led out of the gate. They were turning her out. She slumped together in the area and up for a moment. Then Theresa's arm was about her. They were going forward slowly.

It was good to rest against someone. She shivered in the cool spring air. Someone helped her up a step. They were in a street-car. She was tired. It was good to lean against Theresa—her arm was warm. There was the pain of stepping down and the clang of a departing car and they were in the street. Some children were dancing about a hurdy-gurdy, there was the smell of new-laid asphalt, a man was selling peanuts. She was shoved in a door—and she was in a holy place.

"Where am I?" asked Gabrielle.

"It is church," said Theresa. "My church—the Greek church."

The air was weighted with the thick blue smell of incense, *sodan* it was called. The worshippers knelt, shadowy in the heavy haze. The herd of women's shawled heads was bowed religiously; their patient peasant faces wondered. Their stolid patient arms held heavy breathing babies. There was a dividing strip of red carpet and then the square backs of men, awkward in ready-made suits. To the east a solid darkness of men; to the west a quaint arabesqued design of women's shawls, terra cotta and soiled white. They knelt bathed in shadow and it was still. Then from behind the altar, within the Holy of Holies, came the chant of the priest, in ancient melancholy Old Church Slavic

"Protect our Czar, the Patriarchs, the Holy Synod, protect those on land and sea."

The choir caught it up, "Protect them, protect them." Men's voices, so deep, so tender, in a long drawn ecstasy of sound, that it was a physical hurt.

The Sexless sopranos re-echoed, "Protect, O Lord, protect!" They were aloof, mystical, far removed from pain. Theresa had fallen forward to kiss the oilcloth floor. There was an interwoven, solemn sweetness and the voices were hushed. They died away in low vibration. Gabrielle stood straight. Her lips parted, her throat tilted back.

She was living again that day with him in the country. They waded through mud and underbrush and they came out into the open so suddenly that she felt breathless. They were standing on a huge cliff that dropped away abruptly; below was the Hudson flaked with slow-moving ice cakes. The quiet hush was broken only by the deliciously little rushing sound of a new-melted rill.

The trees stood brown and bare and a few were commencing to bud. They sat down on a little ledge right on the edge of things—below—the river—opposite—the houses of the city. The aloofness, the quiet, brought her a strange feeling of inevitability. She hadn't even struggled against the white twining fingers, against the warm full lips. She had been glad then—and now—she was glad again.

They were chanting in Old Church Slavic. The voice of the high priest thrilled through her with a hallowed comfort; her small tired face was lit with the sacredness of faith and its wonder. She stood there vibrant, mysterious, divinely joyous. She was rapturous. She felt God. . . .

The golden gate behind the altar opened, and the high priest came forth from the Holy of Holies. His brocade yellow *ryasah* was stiff with gold and silver broidery. Full lips, set curiously in his ascetic face, moved as in a rapture. About him was the pale nimbus of stained glass. It was from the transept window—a purple hill, three crosses, stark against a yellow sky, and the sun shining through. His thin fingers twined white about a golden cup. It was the cup of sacred honey, more sacred than the hot, pure blood of Christ; it was the *chashah*, the Holy Grail.

Old crones, women with child, and men who had sinned surged forward in the blaze of the gold *chashah*. Gabrielle

moved forward with them, and pressed close for a taste of the holy, healing nectar. Transfigured, she raised her bowed head to the Holy Grail! With exultant adoring eyes, she saw the golden cup in the hand of the high priest, the golden cup with the white twining fingers about it. . . . The light in her face went out like a snuffed candle.

She knew those white twining fingers. . . .

Then she threw up her arms and laughed aloud. The lunatic sound rang through the cathedral in crazy chiming, until it was choked by the boat-shaped, swinging lamps of Bohemian glass, by the flicker of many candles and the glitter of gold broidery; resounded until it was lost in the warm, pungent odour of heated bodies, the hurtingly sweet smell of *sodan*, the sensuous chant of ancient Slavionsky.

A faint pencil of light streaked the centre aisle; it came from a half-opened door. She had gone.

* * * * *

They were in the kitchen drinking tea.

"She laughed," said Theresa, hugging her fat arms in distress. "She laughed in church. What a laugh! She ran from the good priest's blessing."

They shook their heads and drank their tea.

"I wonder where she may be now," said Higgins.

"Like as not, the river," suggested Annie hopefully.

"Like as not," said he.

"It was the voice of God," said Theresa, crossing herself.

MR. SMITH

By James Laddie Russell

MR. SMITH was a very uncommon man with a very common name. He did not believe there was such a thing as love and had lived for thirty-four years without it. Mr. Smith was not a misogynist, nor was he a dreamer. He did not rant against women, nor did he sing their praises to the gods. He simply tolerated women with a casual deference and regarded them as human beings.

Mr. Smith was a married man.

HE who is furthest from the goal is always the most enthusiastic .

EVERY friendship is a compact between two individuals, each of whom agrees to interpret the idiosyncrasies of the other in terms of genius. This would be pardonable and even charming—if outsiders were not expected to take the same view of the matter.

DEATH INSURANCE

By Van Vechten Hostetter

THE marriage of Lowery Vincent was more than a simple surprise. It was so wholly unexpected that Vincent and his bride were a thousand miles on their way to Coronado before any one recovered sufficiently to step forward and announce that he had expected it all along.

In the first place, Lowery Vincent had lived through the normal marrying years, the sometimes-called matrimonial danger zone, without even a half-serious love affair, so far as any one knew. Old Baxter, his partner, had said that if a man was lucky enough to be a bachelor at thirty and cautious enough to be one at forty he ought to be sensible enough to be safe up to sixty-five. In this every one had not agreed with Baxter, but all had agreed with him that when Lowery Vincent passed his fortieth year matrimony had ceased to be a possibility in his life. So the mere fact of the marriage, since Vincent was a man of some attainment in his profession and some social distinction, would have been well worth the prominence the newspapers gave to it.

But in the second place, Mr. Vincent had always been, in a decent, modest and entirely inoffensive way, exceedingly proud of a long line of eminent ancestors and jealous of a family name, the glory of which he had regarded as a sacred trust. So if it had been supposed that he would marry it would have gone without saying that he would choose a woman of no less distinguished a line than his own; yet Mrs. Vincent, a carpenter's daughter, had been born in obscurity and lived in obscurity. She had, according to old Baxter, apparently lacked the intelligence or the ambition or both to work her way out of that obscurity. It was only by chance that Vincent ever set eyes on her; she happened to be one of a score or more of unimportant witnesses in an important lawsuit and Baxter and Vincent happened to be counsel for one of the parties.

"She might have worked," Baxter told a friend confidentially, "or tried to work. She might have tried to make a stenographer of herself, but I guess she'd have made a blamed poor one."

Which was no thing for Baxter to say, since it was generally admitted among lawyers that Vincent contributed virtually all the brains of the firm.

And again, Vincent had been by word as well as by personal habit and conduct a consistent champion of all conventions. His home, his office, everything that was his and everything that he could control had been subject to his primary rule of good order. He would have been expected to be the last man on earth to deny that a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires some warning of an approaching marriage, notice far enough beforehand to permit the public to talk it over and decide what to do about it.

But there was no advance notice. They simply went to a magistrate's office and were married one afternoon after Vincent had done a full day's work. They were away before the newspapers were out with the story.

There was much exclamation in the cafés and clubs and much speculation as to how it all happened and how it would all result. And all the exclaimers and speculators bet each other that

the women were having the time of their lives exclaiming and speculating over their tea-cups, which the women were.

With very little testimony and evidence at hand and none that would have stood in court, Lowery Vincent was convicted in the cafés and clubs of being an ass and Mary Cutler was convicted on two counts of contributing to his asininity and marrying him for his money. There was a dissenting opinion, but those that held it were hopelessly outnumbered and even more hopelessly out-talked. Among the women there was no verdict, each having her own opinion and keeping it.

There were a few men who had utter faith in Lowery Vincent's judgment in all things. They did not know Mrs. Vincent, but they were satisfied that she was a young woman of most unusual beauty, brains and character. She must be to be Lowery Vincent's wife. He was not a man to be fooled. To be sure, he was not superhuman; he lost lawsuits sometimes, but those were lawsuits that no one could win, and Vincent no doubt knew he would lose long before counsel on the other side had any strong faith in victory.

Vincent, according to these extravagant admirers of his, was a master of law and more. He was a master of physiognomy and psychology and many other sciences. His fund of general and specific knowledge was almost uncanny, being greater than one man could possibly acquire by study, no matter how assiduous. He knew more about every subject than any one, but its specialists, and he knew more than some of them. His argumentative questions in the courtroom had reddened the face and brought sweat to the brow of many an expert witness and finally made him a laughing stock. Old Baxter, despite his commanding physique and impressive manner and his rare oratorical gifts, had never been really successful before Vincent became his partner. Baxter, with his square, heavy face, looked formidable and roared like a lion and shook his iron-grey locks and pounded the table with his huge fists and soared to splendid heights; but it was Vincent who *thought* and told Baxter what to say and when to say it. Jurors and judges thought they were won by Baxter, but these few men who professed to know him best knew that it was Lowery Vincent who won the judges and jurors—Vincent, who was small and almost insignificant looking with his slightly stooping shoulders and yellow-white hair, cut short as if to make it thinner than it was; his narrow, rather weak face; pale blue eyes, always shallow and sometimes utterly empty.

One element of this man's personality those that professed to understand him were unable to explain: there seemed to be nothing of the cynic in him. He had apparently a sublime and child-like faith in the fundamental goodness of the world that they could not reconcile with his profound knowledge of that world. A considerable part of his business as a lawyer was the uncovering of deceit and fraud, yet this did not seem to breed in him any general disposition to suspect and distrust; the men he exposed he regarded as anomalies, mere freaks of Nature, seeming to believe each the last of the kind he should ever see. He was the essence of optimism. Efforts to understand this being as unprofitable as they were tiring, those who assumed to understand all else about him had long since abandoned them, but so far as his marriage was concerned they had this to say: While to Lowery Vincent women generally were, like men, just what they appeared to be, he would never have made Mary Cutler his wife without first having analyzed her in his own psychological and spiritual laboratory until he knew her, head and soul, better than she knew herself.

His students were not so far wrong. They were nearer the truth in this observations, reasonings, surmisings and conclusions than one might expect them to be, having in mind that no two human minds are identical and that psychology is a wild science. Lowery Vin-

cent's high optimism and habitual faith in humankind were a pose; he was at heart a not uncheerful cynic. He thought it a wise and prudent thing to be a cynic of that sort, but a foolish and unprofitable if not costly thing to be known as one of any kind. He regarded people as a contemptible lot and thought the virtue of himself and his friends consisted only in their being somewhat less contemptible than the average. But he never permitted himself to be disturbed by the situation.

II

HAVING fallen in love with Mary Cutler, Vincent had gone methodically about determining whether or not it was the part of wisdom to remain in love with her and to make her his wife. To this task he had devoted the best of his brains, talents and energy. He had been sure of his findings and pleased with them. His analysis of Mary Cutler's character had shown her worthy of the affection he had given her. She looked as old as she was—twenty. She was small and dark, generously enough endowed with personal charms to satisfy a man who was not disposed to overvalue mere physical beauty. Her mind, while not brilliant, was wholesome, and Vincent had assured himself that if in her constricted life she had failed to acquire certain graces she had also failed—happily—to acquire certain harsh, vulgar and pernicious mental attitudes toward life, that is, harsh, vulgar and pernicious when held by women. Above all, he had found her always displaying a clean and sane appreciation of values; she knew the worthlessness of material things in comparison with spiritual.

Before they had been settled two months in the home he had built for her, Lowery Vincent discovered that his wife was developing dangerous tendencies that he had never dreamed she was capable of developing. She was acquiring the very materialistic views from which he had been so happy to find her free. Her interest in his diverse and complicated legal exploits, of which she had so loved to hear him talk, was waning as her interest increased in the fees they would bring if they should prove successful. Vincent was annoyed but not alarmed. His faith in his own judgment would not permit of alarm. Mary was thrown now more or less into association with women who were disposed to think too much of money; he was disappointed to find that their attitudes could influence hers even for a time, but he was quite satisfied that the influences could be no more than transient.

Mary Vincent, however, offered no encouragement to his hopes as days and weeks passed. Her social activities increased and Vincent observed with growing concern that the women whose society she most enjoyed and most sought were not those of genuine worth and serious purpose, but rather those who played a vulgar game of jewels and gowns and extravagant functions, the bad taste of which was the more emphasized by elaborate notices in newspapers of doubtful quality and by none in those that were more jealously edited.

The time came when Vincent, reluctant to reprove his wife, sought by indirection to turn her steps in another course. That effort failed. There were renewed and increased calls for money. Mary regretted them in an unconvincing way, but without money, she said, it was impossible for her to maintain her position as Lowery Vincent's wife. He answered always with a gentle suggestion that so much would not be needed to maintain a position among people whose association was most desirable and beneficial. These suggestions were utterly without effect.

Mary's changed nature wore on Vincent's nerves and the results were manifest in growing irritability, which he tried in vain to master, and fits of pre-occupation and sombre silence. Vincent was ashamed of his weakness and disappointed in himself, but he felt that this suffering would not be in vain

if his attitude would compel a reformation of his wife's views and ambitions. There was no reformation. Mary was unconcerned. It did not appear to matter to her how unwillingly and unhappily her husband supplied her wants so long as he supplied them. Too proud to permit herself to be outshone by the women in whose set she had chosen to be, she found it easy to sacrifice her pride at home and take her husband's money on any terms.

When the situation became intolerable Vincent said:

"Mary, your nature seems to have completely changed since our marriage and it is necessary for me to tell you that it must change again. I want you to be the wife I married."

She was prepared for this.

"What about your nature?" she demanded, her eyes snapping. "What about your promises? What about all your sympathy for me for all the things I'd been denied and promises that I'd have them when you married me?"

"Did I promise you the pleasure of cheapening my name?" he asked.

"I have your letters—or some of them—if you think you need to refresh your memory. It seems so easy for a man to forget—some things."

"Oh, so you saved them," he said bitterly. "You saved them just as a cold-blooded, sordid-minded business man would. You saved them to confront me with."

"Not for that—"

"No, not for that," he sneered, "but you're ready to use them for that—ready to use the blood out of my heart for any low purpose that pleases you. What a fool I am! What a fool I was! Giving my heart to a woman and letting her figure its worth in dollars and cents! Good God!" He laughed cynically.

"So dramatic!" she mocked. "You act like a movie hero. Of course, you meant to buy me—but you're a man, so that was quite proper and noble."

"Buy you! Buy you!" he cried, rising. "Yes, I meant to buy you—to buy you with my honour and good name, to buy you with my very heart and soul, to buy you with my life—and you were willing and glad to sell for my money! Well, we'll *see* how well you do with your scheming!"

"Yes" she said, assurance and a challenge in her tone and in her eyes, "We'll see!"

III

When he reached his office Vincent, having mastered his emotion, wrote a cold and merciless letter to his wife. This day a season of painful economy should be established in his home. She should have a wife's allowance and no longer a mistress's. As for the servants, he himself would dismiss those that were not necessary.

At night, he went home half expecting his wife to sue for peace. He was disappointed again. They were entirely estranged. They could do no more than make pretence of being on good terms to deceive the servants. (But the servants were not deceived.)

Mary Vincent went on as she had gone before. Lacking cash, she found it easy to obtain credit on her husband's name. When the statements went to Lowery Vincent he paid them. He was yet too proud to make the failure of his mariage a topic for bar-room and tea-room gossip, though he felt the time coming when his hatred of Mary would overcome even his pride. The time certainly was coming for an accounting, for Mary's extravagances increased constantly and were far out of proportion to his income.

Lowery Vincent's associates observed a change in him. At first it was not marked enough to be taken seriously, but as time passed his cheerful manner gave way to one of abstraction and melancholy and men began to wonder if this man, who was so near a genius, was not going the way of a genius.

"I think you need a doctor, old man," Baxter told him. "You look ill."

"That's just what I don't need,"

Vincent answered gloomily. "Doctors —they're a great nuisance—the competent ones. Always curing the wrong people."

"You're sick, man, when you talk like that," said Baxter.

"I'd be sick or a wretched fool if I didn't," said Vincent. "What business has a dctor saving life when he doesn't know what kind of a life he's saving?"

"I won't argue that," said Baxter hopelessly, "—but you ought to take my advice."

Another time some friends found him hunched up in a big chair in the club and thought he was asleep until they saw his eyes were open.

"Trying to solve some new problem of life," some one ventured lightly.

"There is only one solution of life," Vincent said without looking up, "and that's death."

So they went away, advising him to have his stomach looked after.

It was a week afterward that Baxter found on his desk a note from Vincent. It said:

Good-bye, old man. Honestly, I hate to leave you like this, but it's necessary, and the sanest thing I ever did. The only solution of life is death.

Baxter, his face white, ran out and through the office and into Vincent's room. A clerk followed him.

"Mr. Vincent hasn't come in yet this morning, Mr. Baxter."

"Get out of here," cried Baxter, pushing the man away and slamming the door.

Then he seized the telephone and called Vincent's house.

"This is Mr. Baxter," he said to the man that answered. "I want Mr. Vincent."

"Mr. Vincent is away," came the reply.

"Where! Where!"

"That I can't say, sir. He hasn't been here since Monday."

IV

THREE days Baxter kept the news from the papers. Then they found it and it made a great sensation. There were columns and columns of speculation and theorizing, reviews of the lawyer's romantic and distinguished career, histories of his famous cases. His "elopement" was recalled with all its interesting and unusual features. And everything was profusely illustrated with stagey photographs of Mary Cutler Vincent in silks, satins, jewels and furs, photographs of which there seemed to be no end. The newspaper "sob sisters" went to interview Mary, found her dry-eyed and scarcely moved, went back to their offices and wrote "stories" describing her variously as a "brave little woman," a "courageous little woman," a "heart-sick girl-wife," a "tortured soul" and a "melting picture of tragic grief."

There were long columns of searching for Lowery Vincent's body and hunting for evidence to show the cause of his suicide. There was no doubt that he had been insane, but the thing that had broken his mind was a mystery. Mary said only that he had not been himself for months; why she could not say.

Vincent's financial affairs were found to have reached a wretched state. He had engaged in the wildest stock speculations and all his investments had been in securities of the most unstable character—the very securities against which he had warned his clients. He had lost everything. But for life insurance his widow would have been left penniless. The aggregate of his policies was two hundred thousand dollars. On these even he had planned to borrow all that the companies would lend, but the negotiations had been still pending when the crash came. The lawyer's weird financial operations, his morose manner, his morbid observations on life and death left no doubt that his mind had been an utter wreck.

In time the Vincent case yielded its place on the first pages. Publicity-

seeking preachers, girl reporters with "the woman's viewpoint," sleuth-reporters and editorial writers had done their best and worst. The vagrant public mind was interested in other things. Then the case blazed forth again with a new sensation. The insurance companies had refused payment to Mrs. Vincent. They didn't deny that her husband was dead, but neither did they admit it. They admitted that he was presumably dead, but they were constrained, as a matter of wise business policy, to require proof. They were not resorting to technicalities to escape just obligations, they insisted; their attitude was taken because it was necessary for their own protection and that of their stockholders and other policyholders.

Now the whole affair and all its details were rehashed and the "sob sisters" struck fresh wells of sympathy for Mrs. Vincent. One yellow journal, which posed as a champion of the people and carried more advertisements of unscrupulous quack doctors than any other newspaper in town, made the companies' action the basis of a vicious attack on all underwriters, calling for State interference on behalf of Mrs. Vincent and legislation to end such high-handed practices for all time.

The companies had, in fact, followed their custom of investigating death claims. Their investigators had found nothing that did not sustain the universal belief that Lowery Vincent had committed suicide. Doubting was part of their business, but what they had learned of Vincent's life had dissolved all their doubt of its end. They had learned that the story of Vincent's marriage and its failure was not a pretty one—not one that his widow would enjoy seeing heralded to the public. So it was to be presumed that the fear of a lawsuit would move Mrs. Vincent to some "reasonable compromise."

But Mary Cutler Vincent was not the woman to compromise with money at stake. She sued. There were the usual postponements and delays in "making up the issues," the usual dickerings of counsel and offers of settlement. Then there was the trial. Mrs. Vincent, bowed and broken in her widow's weeds, presented a pathetic figure, to which the newspaper feature writers and sketch artists did full justice. On the witness stand she detailed in tremulous voice that the crowd must strain to hear her husband's symptoms of mental distress. She "bared her soul," as Betty Bryce, of *The Daily News* put it, and told effectively of her weeks and months of agonizing dread as she saw Lowery Vincent's mind slowly but surely giving way. But on cross-examination, when the pitiless questions of the underwriters' counsel showed unmistakably that they knew the truth and were determined to reveal it, she abandoned her character of wounded helplessness and defiantly—brazenly—admitted that the catastrophe was the result of differences over money and her husband's dissatisfaction and disappointment with her manner of life.

"Then it is probable," asked Rogers Sylvester, the merciless senior counsel, "that if you had been disposed to meet your husband's wishes this whole horrible affair would never have occurred?"

"I suppose so," answered Mary, ignoring her attorney's objections to the question.

"That is all," said Sylvester.

As Mary, under the staring eyes of the amazed courtroom crowd, moved to her seat behind her attorney a messenger came with a note for Sylvester. He read it and in an instant was on his feet.

"If it please the Court," he said, "we have just been advised by telegram that Lowery Vincent has been found—alive—in Des Moines, Iowa, and that he has admitted his identity. We believe the report is true—we have never believed the man was dead"—there was the faintest suggestion of a smile on the crafty lawyer's face—"and we ask a postponement of, say a day or two, for verification."

There was a brief whispered conference of Mary's lawyers, at the end

of which they announced that they would offer no objection to delay and then led their client, white-faced and trembling, away.

V

LOWERY VINCENT disclaimed all knowledge of his note to Baxter and of his movements and actions for three months preceding his disappearance. He had found himself one day, he said, in the Iowa city, conscious apparently for the first time in his life. He had no recollection of anything that had gone before. He had been utterly and hopelessly ignorant of his own identity. It had been as if he had come into the world a mature man. He had realized that some unusual and probably tragic experience was responsible for his situation. A horror of being a public sensation and curiosity had prevented his seeking help. He had taken the first name that occurred to him, John Thomas, and found himself a place as a grocer's clerk, being satisfied that one day the veil of the past would be lifted. It had been lifted when, one day, his employer, having noted his resemblance to the published pictures of Lowery Vincent, had called him sharply by his own name. But the last three months preceding his disappearance still remained a void to him.

This story was credited in some quarters and discredited in others. There were suggestions and rumours of prosecution for conspiracy and attempted fraud, directed against both Vincent and his wife, but there were never more than suggestions and rumours. The journal that had assailed the insurance companies for contesting Mrs. Vincent's claims called stepitantly for severe dealing with unscrupulous tricksters who sought to prey upon honest institutions. It published readers' letters commending its attitude and that was the end.

Mary, forsaken by all her former friends, went as a penitent to Lowery Vincent. He received her charitably, said he forgave and went back to live with her in the mortgaged house. He said he needed rest. When the reporters had been turned away, often enough with the simple word that they had no plans for the future, the reporters forgot them and so did the public.

One evening they walked far out along the river drive. Lowery was silent and his wife, fearful in the insecurity of her position, wondered what his thoughts were, but dared not ask. When he was tired they left the gravel footpath and sat on the cliff that overlooked the stream, he gazing out to the farther shore, she watching him intently and wondering and fearing.

"If I had never been found," he said slowly at last, "you would have been a happy woman. You would have had wealth and no need of me."

"No," she said softly.

He went on as if he had not heard. "You wanted my money to buy things that were high-priced and worthless. If you had it now you probably could not buy them."

"You are cruel," she said. "I thought you had forgiven."

"It was all a lie—everything." The coldness of his voice struck fear to her heart. "I managed to have myself without even the man that found me knowing. There is a suspicion now that you and I are a pair of clever and shameless schemers. . . . Which we are. . . . If I should vanish now who would believe I was dead?"

She could not answer.

"Even if you knew I was dead and said so and sought the price of my life nobody would believe you."

He looked at her and saw fear staring out of her eyes.

"This river," he said, "flows swiftly to the sea. Beneath the surface there is a current swifter yet. I know it. I have known this river ever since I was a boy. If I should jump from this cliff I should be lost and my body would never be found and you would be the only one in the world to know."

She sat and stared at him, unable to speak, unable to move. He rose easily, deliberately, and like a diver plunged into the stream.

AS YOU UNDERSTAND THEM

By John Hamilton

ALL women loved him.

* * * * *

I

THERE was a woman who practised law, spoke ten languages, presided over five clubs, wrote books and delivered lectures.

She had wide hips and flat feet.

To her he said: "Your ears are like little pink shells washed up by foam-tufted waves to the silver shore."

II

THERE was a woman who had wide blue eyes and a round red mouth and sofe white shoulders and a slim figure.

She confined her reading to the Sunday supplement.

To her he said: "When you speak to me the depth of your intellect inspires me to illimitable ambition."

* * * * *

All women loved him.

TO THE VILLAIN

By Helen Woljeska

I SEE my heart as a stage. . .
The hero had fallen to the dust.
His lids are lavender, and his lips ashen.
He is dead—for me.
But in the wings shadowy figures are hurrying to take his place.
The nearest one has your hard black eyes and laughing white teeth. . . .

NO woman believes that a man who has once kissed her can avoid being palpitantly conscious of it every time he meets her.

A WOMAN'S first unhappy marriage calls forth sympathy; her second, suspicion; her third, laughter.

ILE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By Eugene G. O'Neill

CHARACTERS

BEN, *the cabin boy.*
THE STEWARD.
CAPTAIN KEENEY.
SLOCUM, *second mate.*
MRS. KEENEY.
JOE, *a harpooner.*
Members of the crew of the *Atlantic Queen.*

SCENE—Captain Keeney's cabin on board the steam whaling ship Atlantic Queen—*a small, square compartment about eight feet high with a skylight in the centre looking out on the poop deck. On the left (the stern of the ship), a long bench with rough cushions is built in against the wall. In front of the bench, a table. Over the bench, several curtained portholes.*

In the rear, left, a door leading to the captain's sleeping quarters. To the right of the door a small organ, looking as if it were brand new, is placed against the wall.

On the right, to the rear, a marble-topped sideboard. On the sideboard, a woman's sewing basket. Farther forward, a doorway leading to the companion way, and past the officers' quarters to the main deck.

In the centre of the room, a stove. From the middle of the ceiling a hanging lamp is suspended. The walls of the cabin are painted white.

There is no rolling of the ship, and the light which comes through the skylight is sickly and faint, indicating one of those grey days of calm when ocean and sky are alike dead. The silence is unbroken except for the measured tread of someone walking up and down on the poop deck overhead.

It is nearing two bells—one o'clock—in the afternoon of a day in the year 1895.

* * * * *

At the rise of the curtain there is a moment of intense silence. Then THE STEWARD *enters and commences to clear the table of the few dishes which still remain on it after the Captain's dinner. He is an old, grizzled man dressed in dungaree pants, a sweater, and a woollen cap with ear flaps. His manner is sullen and angry. He stops stacking up the plates and casts a quick glance upward at the skylight; then tiptoes over to the closed door in rear and listens with his ear pressed to the crack. What he hears makes his face darken and he mutters a furious curse. There is a noise from the doorway on the right and he darts back to the table.*

BEN *enters. He is an over-grown gawky boy with a long, pinched face. He is dressed in sweater, fur cap, etc. His teeth are chattering with the cold and he hurries to the stove where*

he stands for a moment shivering, blowing on his hands, slapping them against his sides, on the verge of crying.

THE STEWARD

(*In relieved tones—seeing who it is*) Oh, 'tis you, is it? What're ye shiverin' 'bout? Stay by the stove where ye belong and ye'll find no need of chatterin'.

BEN

It's c-c-cold. (*Trying to control his chattering teeth—derisively*) Who d'ye think it were—the Old Man?

THE STEWARD

(*Makes a threatening move—Ben shrinks away*) None o' your lip, young un, or I'll learn ye. (*More kindly*) Where was it ye've been all o' the time—the fo'c'stle?

BEN

Yes.

THE STEWARD

Let the Old Man see ye up for'ard monkeyshinin' with the hands and ye'll get a hidin' ye'll not forget in a hurry.

BEN

Aw, he don't see nothin'. (*A trace of awe in his tones—he glances upward*) He jest walks up and down like he didn't notice nobody—and stares at the ice to the no'the'ard.

THE STEWARD

(*The same tone of awe creeping into his voice*) He's always starin' at the ice. (*In a sudden rage, shaking his fist at the skylight*) Ice, ice, ice! Damn him and damn the ice! Holdin' us in for night on a year—nothin' to see but ice—stuck in it like a fly in molasses!

BEN

(*Apprehensively*) Ssshh! He'll hear ye.

THE STEWARD

(*Raging*) Aye, damn, and damn the Arctic seas, and damn this rotten whalin' ship of his, and damn me for a fool to ever ship on it! (*Subsiding as if realizing the uselessness of this outburst—shaking his head—slowly, with deep conviction*) He's a hard man—as hard a man as ever sailed the seas.

BEN

(*Solemnly*) Aye.

THE STEWARD

The two years we all signed up for are done this day! Two years o' this dog's life, and no luck in the fishin', and the hands half starved with the food runnin' low, rotten as it is; and not a sign of him turnin' back for home! (*Bitterly*) Home! I begin to doubt if ever I'll set foot on land again. (*Excitedly*) What is it he thinks he's goin' to do? Keep us all up here after our time is worked out till the last man of us is starved to death or frozen? We've grub enough hardly to last out the voyage back if we started now. What are the men goin' to do 'bout it? Did ye hear any—talk in the fo'c'stle?

BEN

(*Going over to him—in a half whisper*) They said if he don't put back south for home to-day they're goin' to mutiny.

THE STEWARD

(*With grim satisfaction*) Mutiny? Aye, 'tis the only thing they can do; and serve him right after the manner he's treated them—'s if they weren't no better nor dogs.

BEN

The ice is all broke up to s'uth'ard. They's clear water s'far 's you can see. He ain't got no excuse for not turnin' back for home, the men says.

THE STEWARD

(*Bitterly*) He won't look nowheres but no'the'ard where they's only the ice to see. He don't want to see no clear water. All he thinks on is gittin' the ile—'s if it was our fault he ain't

had good luck with the whales. (*Shaking his head*) I think the man's mighty nigh losin' his senses.

BEN

(*Awed*) D'you really think he's crazy?

THE STEWARD

Aye, it's the punishment o' God on him. Did ye ever hear of a man who wasn't crazy do the things he does? (*Pointing to the door in rear*) Who but a man that's mad would take his woman—and as sweet a woman as ever was—on a rotten whalin' ship to the Arctic seas to be locked in by the ice for nigh on a year, and maybe lose her senses forever—for it's sure she'll never be the same again.

BEN

(*Sadly*) She useter be awful nice to me before— (*His eyes grow wide and frightened*) she got—like she is.

THE STEWARD

Aye, she was good to all of us. 'Twould have been hell on board without her; for he's a hard man—a hard, hard man—a driver if there ever was one. (*With a grim laugh*) I hope he's satisfied now—drivin' her on till she's near lost her mind. And who could blame her? 'Tis a God's wonder we're not a ship full of crazed people—with the ice all the time, and the quiet so thick you're afraid to hear your own voice.

BEN

(*With a frightened glance toward the door on right*) She don't never speak to me no more—jest looks at me 's if she didn't know me.

THE STEWARD

She don't know no one—but him. She talks to him—when she does talk—right enough.

BEN

She does nothin' all day long now but sit and sew—and then she cries to herself wihout makin' no noise. I've seen her.

THE STEWARD

Aye, I could hear her through the door a while back.

BEN

(*Tiptoes over to the door and listens*) She's cryin' now.

THE STEWARD

(*Furiously—shaking his fist*) "God send his soul to hell for the devil he is!" (*There is the noise of someone coming slowly down the companionway stairs.* THE STEWARD *hurries to his stacked up dishes. He is so nervous from fright that he knocks off the top one which falls and breaks on the floor. He stands aghast, trembling with dread. Ben is violently rubbing off the organ with a piece of cloth which he has snatched from his pocket. Captain* KEENEY *appears in the doorway on right and comes into the cabin, removing his fur cap as he does so. He is a man of about forty, around five-ten in height, but looking much shorter on account of the enormous proportions of his shoulders and chest. His face is massive and deeply lined, with grey-blue eyes of a bleak hardness, and a tightly-clenched, thin-lipped mouth. His thick hair is long and grey. He is dressed in a heavy blue jacket and blue trousers stuffed into his sea-boots. He is followed into the cabin by the Second Mate, a rangy six-footer with a lean weather-beaten face. The Mate is dressed about the same as the captain. He is a man of thirty or so.*)

KEENEY

(*Comes toward* THE STEWARD *with a stern look on his face.* THE STEWARD *is visibly frightened and the stack of dishes rattles in his trembling hands.* KEENEY *draws back his fist and* THE STEWARD *shrinks away. The fist is gradually lowered and Keeney speaks slowly*) 'Twould be like hitting a worm. It is nigh on two bells and this truck not cleared yet.

THE STEWARD

(*Stammering*) Y-y-yes, sir.

KEENEY

Instead of doin' your rightful work ye've been below here gossipin' old woman's talk with that boy. (*To* BEN, *fiercely*) Get out o' this you! Clean up the chart room. (BEN *darts past the* MATE *to the open doorway.*) Pick up that dish.

THE STEWARD

(*Doing so with difficulty*) Yes, sir.

KEENEY

The next dish you break you take a bath in the Behring Sea at the end of a rope.

THE STEWARD

(*Trembling*) Yes, sir. (*He hurries out. The Second Mate walks slowly over to the Captain.*)

MATE

I warn't specially anxious the man at the wheel should catch what I wanted to say to you, sir. That's why I asked you to come below.

KEENEY

(*Impatiently*) Speak your say, Mr. Slocum.

MATE

(*Unconsciously lowering his voice*) I'm afeared there'll be trouble with the hands by the look o' things. They'll likely turn ugly, every blessed one o' them, if you don't put back. The two years they signed up for is up to-day.

KEENEY

And d'you think you're tellin' me somethin' new, Mr. Slocum? I've felt it in the air this long time past. D'you think I've not seen their ugly looks and the grudgin' way they worked? (*The door in rear is opened and Mrs. Keeney stands in the doorway. She is a slight, sweet-faced little woman, primly dressed in black. Her eyes are red from weeping and her face drawn and pale. She takes in the cabin with a frightened glance and stands as if fixed to the spot by some nameless dread, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously. The two men turn and look at her.*)

KEENEY

(*With rough tenderness*) Well, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY

(*As if awakening from a dream*) David, I— (*She is silent.* THE MATE *starts for the doorway.*)

KEENEY

(*Turning to him—sharply*) Wait!

MATE

Yes, sir.

KEENEY

D'you want anything, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY

(*After a pause during which she seems to be endeavouring to collect her thoughts*) I thought maybe—I'd go up on deck, David, to get a breath of fresh air. (*She stands humbly awaiting his permission. He and* THE MATE *exchange a significant glance.*)

KEENEY

It's too cold, Annie. You'd best stay below. There's nothing to look at on deck—but ice.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Monotonously*) I know—ice, ice, ice! But there's nothing to see down here but these walls. (*She makes a gesture of loathing.*)

KEENEY

You can play the organ, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Dully*) I hate the organ. It puts me in mind of home.

KEENEY

(*A touch of resentment in his voice*) I got it jest for you!

MRS. KEENEY

(*Dully*) I know. (*She turns away from them and walks slowly to the bench on left. She lifts up one of the*

curtains and looks through a porthole; then utters an exclamation of joy.) Ah, water! clear water! As far as I can see! How good it looks after all these months of ice!" (*She turns round to them, her face transfigured with joy.*) Ah, now I must go up on deck and look at it, David!

KEENEY

(*Frowning*) Best not to-day, Annie. Best wait for a day when the sun shines.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Desperately*) But the sun never shines in this terrible place.

KEENEY

(*A tone of command in his voice*) Best not to-day, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Crumbling before this command—abjectly*) Very well, David. (*She stands there, staring straight before her as if in a daze. The two men look at her uneasily.*)

KEENEY

(*Sharply*) Annie!

MRS. KEENEY

(*Dully*) Yes, David.

KEENEY

Me and Mr. Slocum has business to talk about—ship's business.

MRS. KEENEY

Very well, David. (*She goes slowly out, rear, and leaves the door three-quarters shut behind her.*)

KEENEY

Best not have her on deck if they's goin' to be any trouble.

MATE

Yes, sir.

KEENEY

And trouble they's going to be. I feel it in my bones. (*Takes a revolver from the pocket of his coat and examines it.*) Got your'n?

MATE

Yes, sir.

KEENEY

Not that we'll have to use 'em—not if I know their breed of dog—jest to frighten 'em up a bit. (*Grimly*) I ain't never been forced to use one yit; and trouble I've had by land and by sea s'long as I kin remember, and will have till my dyin' day, I reckon.

MATE

(*Hesitatingly*) Then you ain't goin' —to turn back?

KEENEY

Turn back! Mr. Slocum, did you ever hear o' me pointin' s'uth for home with only a measly four hundred barrel of ile in the hold?

MATE

(*Hastily*) But the grub's gittin' low.

KEENEY

They's enough to last a long time yit, if they're careful with it; and they's plenty of water.

MATE

They say it's not fit to eat—what's left; and the two years they signed on fur is up to-day. They might make trouble for you in the courts when we git home.

KEENEY

Let them make what law trouble they kin! I don't give a damn 'bout the money. I've got to git the ile! (*Glancing sharply at the* MATE) You ain't turnin' no sea lawyer, be you, Mr. Slocum?

MATE

(*Flushing*) Not by a hell of a sight, sir.

KEENEY

What do the fools want to go home fur now? Their share o' the four hundred barrel wouldn't keep them in chewin' terbacco.

MATE

(*Slowly*) They wants to git back to their old folks an' things, I s'pose.

KEENEY

(*Looking at him searchingly*) 'N you want to turn back too. (*The* MATE *looks down confusedly before his sharp gaze*) Don't lie, Mr. Slocum. It's writ down plain in your eyes. (*With grim sarcasm*) I hope, Mr. Slocum, you ain't goin' to jine the men agin me.

MATE

(*Indignantly*) That ain't fair, sir, to say sich things.

KEENEY

(*With satisfaction*) I warn't much afeard o' that, Tom. You been with me nigh on ten year and I've learned ye whalin'. No man kin say I ain't a good master, if I be a hard one.

MATE

I warn't thinkin' of myself, sir—'bout turnin' home, I mean. (*Desperately*) But Mrs. Keeney, sir—seems like she ain't jest satisfied up here, ailin' like—what with the cold an' bad luck an' the ice an' all.

KEENEY

(*His face clouding—rebukingly, but not severely*) That's my business, Mr. Slocum. I'll thank you to steer a clear course o' that. (*A pause*) The ice'll break up soon to no'the'ard. I could see it startin' to-day. And when it goes and we git some sun Annie'll perk up. (*Another pause—then he bursts forth*) It ain't the damned money what's keepin' me up in the Northern seas, Tom. But I can't go back to Homeport with a measly four hundred barrel of ile. I'd die fust. I ain't never come back home in all my days without a full ship. Ain't that truth?

MATE

Yes, sir; but this voyage you been ice-bound, an'—

KEENEY

(*Scornfully*) And d'you s'pose any of 'em would believe that—any o' them skippers I've beaten voyage after voyage? Can't you hear 'em laughin' and sneerin'—Tibbots n' Harris n' Simms and the rest—and all o' Homeport makin' fun o' me? "Dave Keeney, what boasts he's the best whalin' skipper out o' Homeport, comin' back with a measly four hundred barrel of ile!" (*The thought of this drives him into a frenzy and he smashes his fist down on the marble top of the sideboard*) I got to git the ile, I tell you! How could I figger on this ice? It's never been so bad before in the thirty year I been acomin' here. And now it's breakin' up. In a couple o' days it'll be all gone. And they's whale here, plenty of 'em. I know they is, and I ain't never gone wrong yit. I got to git the ile! I got to git it in spite of all hell, and by God, I ain't agoin' home till I do git it! (*There is the sound of subdued sobbing from the door in rear. The two men stand silent for a moment, listening. Then* KEENEY *goes over to the door and looks in. He hesitates for a moment as if he were going to enter—then closes the door softly.* JOE, *the harpooner, an enormous six-footer with a battered, ugly face, enters from right and stands waiting for the Captain to notice him.*)

KEENEY

(*Turning and seeing him*) Don't be standin' there like a gawk, Harpooner. Speak up!

JOE

(*Confusedly*) We want—the men, sir—they wants to send a depitation aft to have a word with you.

KEENEY

(*Furiously*) Tell 'em to go to—(*Checks himself and continues grimly*) Tell 'em to come. I'll see 'em.

JOE

Aye, aye, sir. (*He goes out*)

KEENEY

(*With a grim smile*) Here it comes, the trouble you spoke of, Mr. Slocum, and we'll make short shift of it. It's better to crush such things at the start than let them make headway.

MATE

(*Worriedly*) Shall I wake up the First and Fourth, sir? We might need their help.

KEENEY

No, let them sleep. I'm well able to handle this alone, Mr. Slocum. (*There is the shuffling of footsteps from outside and five of the crew crowd into the cabin, led by* JOE. *All are dressed alike—sweaters, sea boots, etc. They glance uneasily at the Captain, twirling their fur caps in their hands.*)

KEENEY

(*After a pause*) Well? Who's to speak fur ye?

JOE

(*Stepping forward with an air of bravado*) I be.

KEENEY

(*Eyeing him up and down coldly*) So you be. Then speak your say and be quick about it.

JOE

(*Trying not to wilt before the Captain's glance and avoiding his eyes*) The time we signed up for is done today.

KEENEY

(*Icily*) You're tellin' me nothin' I don't know.

JOE

You ain't p'intin' fur home yit, far s'we kin see.

KEENEY

No, and I ain't agoin' to till this ship is full of ile.

JOE

You can't go no further no'the with the ice afore ye.

KEENEY

The ice is breaking up.

JOE

(*After a slight pause, during which the others mumble angrily to one another*) The grub we're gittin' now is rotten.

KEENEY

It's good enough fur ye. Better men than ye are have eaten worse. (*There is a chorus of angry exclamations from the crowd.*)

JOE

(*Encouraged by this support*) We ain't agoin' to work no more less you puts back for home.

KEENEY

(*Fiercely*) You ain't, ain't you?

JOE

No; and the law courts'll say we was right.

KEENEY

To hell with your law courts! We're at sea now and I'm the law on this ship! (*Edging up toward the harpooner*) And every mother's son of you what don't obey orders goes in irons. (*There are more angry exclamations from the crew.* MRS. KEENEY *appears in the doorway in rear and looks on with startled eyes. None of the men notice her.*)

JOE

(*With bravado*) Then we're agoin' to mutiny and take the old hooker home ourselves. Ain't we, boys? (*As he turns his head to look at the others,* KEENEY'S *fist shoots out to the side of his jaw.* JOE *goes down in a heap and lies there.* MRS. KEENEY *gives a shriek and hides her face in her hands. The men pull out their sheath knives and start a rush, but stop when they find themselves confronted by the revolvers of* KEENEY *and the* MATE.)

KEENEY

(*His eyes and voice snapping*) Hold still! (*The men stand huddled togeth-*

er in a sullen silence. KEENEY'S *voice is full of mockery*) You's found out it ain't safe to mutiny on this ship, ain't you? And now git for'ard where ye belong, and—(*He gives* JOE'S *body a contemptuous kick*) drag him with you. And remember, the first man of ye I see shirkin' I'll shoot dead as sure as there's a sea under us, and you can tell the rest the same. Git for'ard now! Quick! (*The men leave in cowed silence, carrying* JOE *with them.* KEENEY *turns to the* MATE *with a short laugh and puts his revolver back in his pocket*) Best get up on deck, Mr. Slocum, and see to it they don't try none of their skulkin' tricks. We'll have to keep an eye peeled from now on. I know 'em.

MATE

Yes, sir. (*He goes out, right.* KEENEY *hears his wife's hysterical weeping and turns around in surprise—then walks slowly to her side.*)

KEENEY

(*Putting an arm around her shoulder—with gruff tenderness*) There, there, Annie. Don't be afeard. It's all past and gone.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Shrinking away from him*) Oh, I can't bear it! I can't bear it any longer!

KEENEY

(*Gently*) Can't bear what, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY

(*Hysterically*) All this horrible brutality, and these brutes of men, and this terrible ship, and this prison cell of a room, and the ice all around, and the silence. (*After this outburst she calms down and wipes her eyes with her handkerchief.*)

KEENEY

(*After a pause during which he looks down at her with a puzzled frown*) Remember, I warn't hankerin' to have you come on this voyage, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

I wanted to be with you, David, don't you see? I didn't want to wait back there in the house all alone as I've been doing these last six years since we were married—waiting, and watching, and fearing—with nothing to keep my mind occupied—not able to go back teaching school on account of being Dave Keeney's wife. I used to dream of sailing on the great, wide, glorious ocean. I wanted to be by your side in the danger and vigorous life of it all. I wanted to see you the hero they make you out to be in Homeport. And instead (*Her voice grows tremulous*) all I find is ice and cold—and brutality! (*Her voice breaks.*)

KEENEY

I warned you what it'd be, Annie. "Whalin' ain't no ladies' tea party," I says to you, "and you better stay to home where you've got all your woman's comforts." (*Shaking his head*) But you was so set on it.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Wearily*) Oh, I know it isn't your fault, David. You see, I didn't believe you. I guess I was dreaming about the old Vikings in the story books and I thought you were one of them.

KEENEY

(*Protestingly*) I done my best to make it as cosy and comfortable as could be. (MRS. KEENEY *looks around her in wild scorn*) I even sent to the city for that organ for ye, thinkin' it might be soothin' to ye to be playin' it times when they was calms and things was dull like.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Wearily*) Yes, you were very kind, David. I know that. (*She goes to left and lifts the curtains from the porthole and looks out—then suddenly bursts forth*): I won't stand it—I can't stand it—pent up by these walls like a prisoner. (*She runs over to him and throws her arms around him, weeping. He puts his arm protectingly over her shoulders*) Take me away

from here, David! If I don't get away from here, out of this terrible ship, I'll go mad! Take me home, David! I can't think any more. I feel as if the cold and the silence were crushing down on my brain. I'm afraid. Take me home!

KEENEY

(*Holds her at arm's length and looks at her face anxiously*) Best go to bed, Annie. You ain't yourself. You got fever. Your eyes look so strange like. I ain't never seen you look this way before.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Laughing hysterically*) It's the ice and the cold and the silence—they'd make anyone look strange.

KEENEY

(*Soothingly*) In a month or two, with good luck, three at the most, I'll have her filled with ile and then we'll give her everything she'll stand and p'int for home.

MRS. KEENEY

But we can't wait for that—I can't wait. I want to get home. And the men won't wait. They want to get home. It's cruel, it's brutal for you to keep them. You must sail back. You've got no excuse. There's clear water to the south now. If you've a heart at all you've got to turn back.

KEENEY

(*Harshly*) I can't, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

Why can't you?

KEENEY

A woman couldn't rightly understand my reason.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Wildly*) Because it's a stupid, stubborn reason. Oh, I heard you talking with the second mate. You're afraid the other captains will sneer at you because you didn't come back with a full ship. You want to live up to your silly reputation even if you do have to beat and starve men and drive me mad to do it.

KEENEY

(*His jaw set stubbornly*) It ain't that, Annie. Them skippers would never dare sneer to my face. It ain't so much what anyone'd say—but—(*He hesitates, struggling to express his meaning*) you see—I've always done it—since my first voyage as skipper. I always come back—with a full ship—and—it don't seem right not to—somehow. I been always first whalin' skipper out o' Homeport, and—don't you see my meanin', Annie? (*He glances at her. She is not looking at him, but staring dully in front of her, not hearing a word he is saying.*) Annie! (*She comes to herself with a start*) Best turn in, Annie, there's a good woman. You ain't well.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Resisting his attempts to guide her to the door in rear*) David! Won't you please turn back?

KEENEY

(*Gently*) I can't, Annie—not yet awhile. You don't see my meanin'. I got to git the ile.

MRS. KEENEY

I'd be different if you needed the money, but you don't. You've got more than plenty.

KEENEY

(*Impatiently*) It ain't the money I'm thinkin' of. D'you think I'm as mean as that?

MRS. KEENEY

(*Dully*) No—I don't know—I can't understand. (*Intensely*) Oh, I want to be home in the old house once more, and see my own kitchen again, and hear a woman's voice talking to me and be able to talk to her. Two years! It seems so long ago—as if I'd been dead and could never go back.

KEENEY

(*Worried by her strange tone and the far-away look in her eyes*) Best go to bed, Annie. You ain't well.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Not appearing to hear him*) I used to be lonely when you were away. I used to think Homeport was a stupid, monotonous place. Then I used to go down on the beach, especially when it was windy and the breakers were rolling in, and I'd dream of the fine free life you must be leading. (*She gives a laugh which is half a sob*) I used to love the sea then. (*She pauses; then continues with slow intensity*) But now—I don't ever want to see the sea again.

KEENEY

(*Thinking to humour her*) 'Tis no fit place for a woman, that's sure. I was a fool to bring ye.

MRS. KEENEY

(*After a pause—passing her hand over her eyes with a gesture of pathetic weariness*) How long would it take us to reach home—if we started now?

KEENEY

(*Frowning*) 'Bout two months, I reckon, Annie, with fair luck.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Counts on her fingers—then murmurs with a rapt smile*) That would be August, the latter part of August, wouldn't it? It was on the twenty-fifth of August we were married, David, wasn't it?

KEENEY

(*Trying to conceal the fact that her memories have moved him gruffly*) Don't *you* remember?

MRS. KEENEY

(*Vaguely—again passes her hand over her eyes*) My memory is leaving me—up here in the ice. It was so long ago. (*A pause—then she smiles dreamily*) It's June now. The lilacs will be all in bloom in the front yard—and the climbing roses on the trellis to the side of the house—they're budding—(*She suddenly covers her face with her hands and commences to sob.*)

KEENEY

(*Disturbed*) Go in and rest, Annie. You're all wore out cryin' over what can't be helped.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and clinging to him*) You love me, don't you, David?

KEENEY

(*In amazed embarrassment at this outburst*) Love you? Why d'you ask me such a question, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY

(*Shaking him fiercely*) But you do, don't you, David? Tell me!

KEENEY

I'm your husband, Annie, and you're my wife. Could there be aught but love between us after all these years?

MRS. KEENEY

(*Shaking him again—still more fiercely*) Then you do love me. Say it!

KEENEY

(*Simply*) I do, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Gives a sigh of relief—her hands drop to her sides.* KEENEY *regards her anxiously. She passes her hand across her eyes and murmurs half to herself*): I sometimes think if we could only have had a child—(KEENEY *turns away from her, deeply moved. She grabs his arm and turns him around to face her—intensely*) And I've always been a good wife to you, haven't I, David?

KEENEY

(*His voice betraying his emotion*) No man has ever had a better, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

And I've never asked for much from you, have I, David? Have I?

KEENEY

You know you could have all I got the power to give ye, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Wildly*) Then do this, this once, for my sake, for God's sake—take me home! It's killing me, this life—the brutality and cold and horror of it. I'm going mad. I can feel the threat in the air. I can hear the silence threatening me—day after grey day and every day the same. I can't bear it. (*Sobbing*) I'll go mad, I know I will. Take me home, David, if you love me as you say. I'm afraid. For the love of God, take me home! (*She throws her arms around him, weeping against his shoulder. His face betrays the tremendous struggle going on within him. He holds her out at arm's length, his expression softening. For a moment his shoulders sag, he becomes old, his iron spirit weakens as he looks at her tear-stained face.*)

KEENEY

(*Dragging out the words with an effort*) I'll do it, Annie—for your sake—if you say it's needful for ye.

MRS. KEENEY

(*With wild joy—kissing him*) God bless you for that, David! (*He turns away from her silently and walks toward the companionway. Just at that moment there is a clatter of footsteps on the stairs and the* SECOND MATE *enters the cabin.*)

MATE

(*Excitedly*) The ice is breakin' up to no'the'ard, sir. There's a clear passage through the floe, and clear water beyond, the lookout says. (KEENEY *straightens himself like a man coming out of a trance.* MRS. KEENEY *looks at the* MATE *with terrified eyes.*)

KEENEY

(*Dazedly trying to collect his thoughts*) A clear passage? To no'the'ard?

MATE

Yes, sir.

KEENEY

(*His voice suddenly grim with determination*) Then get her ready and we'll drive her through.

MATE

Aye, aye, sir.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Appealingly*) David!

KEENEY

(*Not heeding her*) Will the men turn to willin' or must we drag 'em out?

MATE

They'll turn to willin' enough. You put the fear o' God into 'em, sir. They're meek as lambs.

KEENEY

Then drive 'em—both watches. (*With grim determination*) They's whale t'other side o' this floe and we're agoin' to git 'em.

MATE

Aye, aye, sir. (*He goes out hurriedly. A moment later there is the sound of scuffling feet from the deck outside and the* MATE'S *voice shouting orders*)

KEENEY

(*Speaking aloud to himself—derisively*) And I was agoin' home like a yaller dog!

MRS. KEENEY

(*Imploringly*) David!

KEENEY

(*Sternly*) Woman, you ain't adoin' right when you meddle in men's business and weaken 'em. You can't know my feelin's. I got to prove a man to be a good husband for ye to take pride in. I got to git the ile, I tell ye.

MRS. KEENEY

(*Supplicatingly*) David! Aren't you going home?

KEENEY

(*Ignoring this question—commandingly*) You ain't well. Go and lay down a mite. (*He starts for the door*) I got to git on deck. (*He goes out. She cries after him in anguish, "David!" A pause. She passes her hand across her eyes—then commences to laugh hysterically and goes to the organ. She sits down and starts to play wildly an old hymn, "There is rest for the weary."* KEENEY *re-enters from the doorway to the deck and stands looking at her angrily. He comes over and grabs her roughly by the shoulder.*)

KEENEY

Woman, what foolish mockin' is this? (*She laughs wildly and he starts back from her in alarm*) Annie! What is it? (*She doesn't answer him.* KEENEY'S *voice trembles*) Don't you know me, Annie? (*He puts both hands on her shoulders and turns her around so that he can look into her eyes. She stares up at him with a stupid expression, a vague smile on her lips. He stumbles away from her, and she commences softly to play the organ again.*)

KEENEY

(*Swallowing hard—in a hoarse whisper, as if he had difficulty in speaking*) You said—you was agoin' mad—God! (*A long wail is heard from the deck above, "Ah, bl-o-o-o-ow!" A moment later the* MATE'S *face appears through the skylight. He cannot see* MRS. KEENEY.)

MATE

(*In great excitement*) Whales, sir—a whole school of 'em—off the starb'd quarter 'bout five mile away—big ones!

KEENEY

(*Galvanized into action*) Are you lowerin' the boats?

MATE

Yes, sir.

KEENEY

(*With grim decision*) I'm acomin' with ye.

MATE

Aye, aye, sir. (*Jubilantly*) You'll git the ile now right enough, sir. (*His head is withdrawn and he can be heard shouting orders*)

KEENEY

(*Turning to his wife*) Annie! Did you hear him? I'll git the ile. (*She doesn't answer or seem to know he is there. He gives a hard laugh which is almost a groan*) I know you're foolin' me, Annie. You ain't out of your mind—(*Anxiously*) be you? I'll git the ile now right enough—jest a little while longer, Annie—then we'll turn hom'ard. I can't turn back now, you see that, don't ye? I've got to git the ile. (*In sudden terror*) Answer me! You ain't mad, be you? (*She keeps on playing the organ but makes no reply. The* MATE'S *face appears again through the skylight.*)

MATE

All ready, sir. (KEENEY *turns his back on his wife and strides to the doorway, where he stands for a moment and looks back at her in anguish, fighting to control his feelings.*)

MATE

Comin', sir?

KEENEY

(*His face suddenly grown hard with determination*) Aye. (*He turns abruptly and goes out.* MRS. KEENEY *does not appear to notice his departure. Her whole attention seems centred in the organ. She sits with half-closed eyes, her body swaying a little from side to side to the rhythm of the hymn. Her fingers move faster and faster and she is playing wildly and discordantly as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE AVENUE

By Benjamin De Casseres

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Look at them! Observe their environment! Behind them, in that magnificent library — the Intelligence Office of the Spirit—lies the wisdom of the ages, and all the wit of man and the tergiversations and craftiness of woman.

Books have souls. Books *are* souls. They have auras. They radiate their beauty, their venom and their modesty. Everything is in that marbled magnificence at Forty-second Street—from the obscure magic of the Hindu syllable Om, analyzed by ten thousand dead Yogis, to the human-all-too-human stories of O. Henry, the first historian of New York City.

Ambrose and Antoine have breakfasted, dined and supped on this Gargantuan fare for years. Look at the smiles of all wisdom and complacency on their faces. They are glutted with supra-subtle ideas. Their heavy-lidded eyes are argosies of the stuffs of wit and dreams. They are retired Zeppelins of trans-stellar mental zeniths.

In front of them lies Reality camouflaged as Fifth Avenue. Humanity *en auto*. Humanity top o' the bus. Humanity afoot on its multi-mysterious errands. Humanity in khaki. Humanity in eddies, waves, bunches, feminine bouquets. Humanity that smiles, weeps, pushes, crawls, tramples, pays, begs, buys, borrows and gets credit.

It is Fifth Avenue, the velvet-sheathed piston-rod of bellowing New York, the underworld of the upper world, the new Rue de la Paix, the Louvre of democracy.

So Ambrose and Antoine, like two watchmen of Life, with the ideals, fancies and cynicisms of the ages in back of them and the panorama of the quick in front of them, are to me—the confidant of their conversation and remarks— the very last utterance on things in general.

"The sights and sounds of the Avenue," said Antoine, who had fed too much of late, in the deeps of the night, on the jewelled cynicism of Heinrich Heine, and who was much the more intellectually blasé of the two, "are beginning to tell on me. I need a change. Oh, for a glimpse of Broadway! Ambrose, have you heard all they say about that magic road as they pass under our paws? It must be a great avenue of yellow light and gaiety, of jewels and music, of rouge and lustres, where décolleté bulbuls sing all night to lavender ceilings. More artificial than this road of taxis and careworn smiles, and I long for the artificial. In which direction is Broadway, anyhow?"

"Oh, somewhere over toward the Palisades, I believe," replied Ambrose, tossing his white mane due west. "But you have no longer any imagination, Antoine. My world is right here. I never tire of it. Here is real tragedy, comedy, burlesque, farce and vaudeville. Where have your eyes gone to? You are bilious. Fifth Avenue has become to you a mere smudge of daylight. To me it is a world of fairies and puppets who put on another spectacle each minute. You'll be yearning for a trip in the subway next."

Ambrose is very old. He knows and applies that great apothegm of Parsifal Hammerschlat, the great Roumanian seer, that he who contemplates moves and he who travels arrives nowhere. His imagination is the high road to a Nirvana of ideas and flowery couches on Parnassus. He is a lion de luxe. He takes down the wisdom of the gods in the shorthand of his instant apprehension. He smears the jam of imagination over the raw meat of reality.

Antoine, on the other hand, is very young. One can see that in the way he imitates the sinister smile of Ambrose. He is young enough to be a great cynic. He loves the artificial, the concrete. He prefers the scenery of a department store to the heights of Mont Blanc, or even Brooklyn Bridge.

"The psychology of Fifth Avenue," continued Ambrose, fixing his eyes vacantly on a glittering brass button on the uniform of the traffic cop at Forty-second Street, "has yet to be done. So far we have only described its physiognomy. There is more than a face here. There is a soul to this mess."

"Mess is right," growled Antoine. "The Maker of things is not an artist—at least he was not when he hammered out this furious irrelevancy. Oh, for Grand Street on a Saturday night in the good old days. This is only an imitation of that great coloured, noisy flash. Look at this ivory tower coming along lit by the crimson lantern of alcohol, and that bit of moral perfumery in pants, and that inspired plumber who writes free verse. Mess is right. They lie like Time."

"A soul to this mess, I said," continued Ambrose, who always listened politely to the charming vacuities of Antoine. "I can see as far south as the Washington Arch and north to the Sherman statue, and what I see is the Champs Elysées of a mightier Paris. The buses are red chariots laden with demi-gods. The sites of these shops are vast gardens wherein poets and children eat dreams and drink starlight. All New York aspires to Fifth Avenue, and Fifth Avenue aspires to Beauty."

"It is the horizontal Eiffel Tower of the West—all hardware, elevators and tips," broke in Antoine.

"As I have told you, my dear Antoine, you lack the Sense of Mystery. You look on this exotic spectacle—"

"Exotic!" sneered Antoine. "Per-oxotic spectacle, you mean, don't you?"

"I have noted, Antoine, in my evolution from flesh to marble that all epigrammatists are impolite. They cut into the thread of your discourse with stale puns and abstract piffle. They might learn much from waiters in the matter of courtesy. I said you lack a Sense of Mystery. This spectacle is to you a mere procession of people hurrying for flapjacks or millinery. Your eyes are domesticated. Mine are nomad. These crowds are hatted, booted and coated ghosts of the Future—"

"Ghosts of the Future—that's worthy of Lafcadio Hearn, or some of those other dream-peddlers back there in the library." Antoine laughed so loudly that the attendant at the main door was compelled to lift an admonishing finger in his direction.

"Ghosts of the Future," reiterated Ambrose, with the sublime pomposity or an o'erladen Socrates. "And, by the way, why should ghosts be said only to survive the dead? Why should they not also be forerunners of the living? We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little lives are rounded with a—"

"'Sleep' in the third race to-morrow looks good," murmured Antoine over his *Evening Telegram*.

"Wraiths of the future," continued Ambrose, "the raw material of America's magic to-morrows; the alchemic grandeur of these apparelled but unconscious forces, these raw tribes on their way to found a super-Athens. The psychology of Fifth Avenue. These whirling automobiles. I see—"

"Wheels," said Antoine as he composed himself for a siesta.

THE DESIDERATE REPUTATION

By Mifflin Crane

I

"AND so, believe me or not," Dr. Allen finished his recitation, "these little blondes are the most amusing after all—isn't that so, Whalen?"

Allen turned jocularly to a bland, cherubic-faced little fellow on his left and throwing the comic query at him, whacked the small man's back humorously. The other club members in the circle laughed—at Whalen's expense. Some such drollery could be expected from Allen—for it was jocose to ask little Whalen's opinion about blondes or any other shade of women. His respectability was of such a long and well-known standing that it would have sufficed to throw a mantle of virtue over the moral deviations of all present.

A flush appeared on Whalen's round cheeks and he arose nervously.

"Whither bound?" asked someone.

"I guess I'd better be getting along," he said.

"I say, don't leave us yet!" came from Dr. Allen. "I didn't mean to embarrass you, old man!"

Whalen smiled feebly.

"Oh, you fellows are very silly!" he exclaimed. "And you don't think I'd go on account of a duffer like you, do you, Allen? How do you know what I do?" (Whalen endeavoured to look sly and achieved a droll expression like an unsophisticated guinea-pig playing fox.) "What do you know about the way I spend my time? Maybe I don't *talk* so—"

Whatever else he said or had in mind to say was obliterated by a concerted outburst of laughter. Whalen saw that he had been mistaken to pretend to a deviltry that he obviously didn't practise. His confusion brought blushes again into his cheeks and he hurried across the room to where the hat boy stood holding his outer garments in readiness. And even the latter smirked suspiciously.

Whalen reached the street, whereupon a disconsolate droop settled upon his shoulders. He thought poorly of himself. He lacked assurance and initiative and he belonged to the wrong club. They weren't the sort of fellows for him—and yet, he liked them. A sigh like the sob of a small night-wind escaped him. Whalen was unhappy. . . .

He had nowhere to go and so he walked aimlessly, as one without a purpose will walk. He was not alive to the recognition of the streets through which he passed, nor was he thinking coherently of any thing in particular. He was given over simply to a melancholious mood and a sense of self-irritation. He did not look at anybody on the street, nor did anybody look at him, for he was not a man to arrest attention.

By a new and unpleasant dampness in the air that passed his face his proximity to the river was made known to him. He was approaching one of the upper and less used bridges that now in the night appeared without human occupancy. The stretch ahead was dim, misty, and desolate.

Whalen, observing how far he had come, hesitated a moment and then went on.

Whatever had been the obscure impulse of that act, the urge, or perhaps only inertia, that had led him to set foot on the bridge, he was a second later involved in an interest that removed his thoughts immediately from the indefinite figures of his melancholy. For he saw in front of him the mist-obscured figure of a girl, standing with her hands gripped on the railing of the bridge and her eyes turned out to the river, as if she were waiting and expectant of something from the darkness.

She came into little Whalen's sight suddenly. She must have been there before, for some minutes indeed, but in her pronounced immobility he had not seen her. It was this sudden apprehension of her being that caused Whalen to start and stop, as if she had been of the quality of apparitions.

The girl neither heard nor saw him, but retained her pose that so suggested a tense watching. Her presence there was obviously not that of the aimless who stand in such places and dumbly stare into the water. It was this consciousness of some purpose she must have that stayed Whalen and kept him motionless, looking at her.

Perhaps two or three minutes would have summed up the time during which he observed her but made no movement. Then with a start and a curious thrill of terror, he broke into a rapid walk in her direction. She had not stirred, her immobility was as perfect as the heavy mists that hung over the river—yet Whalen, by some curious clairvoyance had suddenly sensed her intent, and the figure of her body, standing tensely, signified only a single purpose to him.

She turned swiftly as he drew to her side, but not soon enough to prevent his outstretched hand from touching her shoulder.

"What do you want?" she asked him in a low, unpleasant voice.

"You—you mustn't," he said feebly.

"What?"

"You were intending—you intended to—"

Whalen stopped; he couldn't get his perception into words.

She moved her head a moment and looked down into the fog under which lay the water, turning it back to him again, this time slowly.

"Suppose I did?" she asked. "It's none of your business! Who are you, anyway? What do you know about me?"

Whalen was silent and embarrassed and the girl, waiting a moment for some word from him, regarded him curiously, thrusting her face a little forward.

Whalen saw in her countenance now an expression of defiance that was somehow forced and unreal. The contour of that face was not unpretty, but it was a prettiness nearly spent. Her eyes gleamed lustrously, like those of one in a fever, an impression more marked by bright spots of expanding and contracting colour in her cheeks.

"Why—you're a respectable person!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here, talking to me? I'm not respectable. You'd better run on before somebody that knows you catches sight of you here!"

"I'm not going!" mumbled little Whalen, doggedly.

"What?" she inquired harshly. "What are you going to do, then?"

"What are *you* going to do?" he asked.

"You better go on," she said.

"I'm not going," he repeated.

"Look here," she said. "If you're a new variety of those Salvation Johnnies, it's no use. I'm done—can't you see that?"

She glanced swiftly toward the river.

"If that don't get me, I'm done in a little while, anyway. Can't you see that?"

The significance of her words became apparent to Whalen as she fastened her eyes upon him. He understood the meaning of their febrile glitter. He stared at her a moment, astonished and shocked. He was utterly at a loss for anything to do; he had come out of his own world into one unknown to

him. It was with the unreasoning conviction that he must do *something* that he took her arm and pulled her with him a step or two along the bridge.

She resisted suddenly and stopped.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"Come on," he said. "You can't stay here!"

"Where do you want me to go?"

"Come on!" he cried querulously, deeply concerned that her obstinacy might overcome him and that he would be forced at last to leave her there with her unspeakable intention.

She frowned and held back a moment more. But the little man who was tugging at her arm seemed ludicrously insistent and as ludicrously solemn. The girl laughed, harshly, horribly—and followed him.

Now that she was walking with him, Whalen was further bewildered. He tried to discover in his mind some purpose in his insistence, some aim that he had unaccountably forgotten. Meanwhile she moved at his side in silence, liked an attendant ghost.

They had covered a square or more, when Whalen stopped abruptly and looked about him.

"We're not getting anywhere," he muttered.

The girl said nothing. She waited on his purpose. And on his part, he perceived then that there was only one place he could take her—to his rooms.

"We'll find a telephone along here somewhere," he said. "I'll get a taxi."

Once more she followed him, leaning on his arm. At the next corner they came to a drug store where Whalen turned in and telephoned. They then went outside and waited. A clerk in the store stepped to the window and stared out at them through the glass. In the time of waiting, neither of them spoke.

The cab drew up to the curb at last and before she stepped into it, the girl looked curiously at Whalen. He was frowning a little and his physiognomy suggested nothing save perturbation. She seemed to read none of the enigma that she found in him, and with a faint shrug of her shoulders, like a gesture of resignation, she dropped to the cushions of the taxi. Whalen directed the driver and they pulled away with a jerk.

Once during the ride she spoke to him, putting a question.

"What is it you intend doing with me?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered her.

She stared at him a moment with surprise, and then turned away her head, dropping her face until it was hidden in shadow. She was too apathetic to search further.

But Whalen's answer had been true. He had no plan nor aim. He did not understand now why he had insisted on the girl's coming with him, nor what he should do with her. The moments were, after a fashion, not quite real. He was so taken up with his perplexity that they had been stopped a minute or two before he was aware of their arrival. The driver had climbed down and opened the door. . . .

Whalen stepped out and stood waiting to assist the girl. From the shadows of the cab she peered a second at the street before, stooping, she arose and extended her hand.

He led her up the steps and into the elevator. Ascending, the elevator boy looked at them curiously. The two got out and Whalen opened the door in the corridor that led to his apartment, standing aside that the girl might enter first.

As she had done in the cab, she hesitated, looking at him with an expression of surprise. Then she went in.

After Whalen had shut the door, she turned and faced him.

"What do you expect to do with me?" she asked.

Now, in the light, the spots of red on her cheeks glowed ominously like inner consuming fires.

"You'd better go to bed," said Whalen. "You're not well."

And, after a hesitation:

"Come—I'll show you to your room."

The girl followed him dumbly; Whalen touched a button and the chamber into which he led her was flooded with light.

"Is there anything I can get for you?" he asked her.

Her eyes were very wide, she looked upon his face. He stood nervously before her, waiting. Then, throwing back her head a little, she began to laugh. It was an hysterical, harsh and joyless sound that stopped with the suddenness with which it had begun.

"No! no!" she exclaimed.

Whalen drew back to the door.

"Good-night, then," he said.

He waited a moment, but the girl made no answer, staring at him meanwhile like one who looks, unexpectedly, upon that which startles and is strange.

It did not seem that she intended to speak, and Whalen backed out, closing the door after him.

II

In the days that followed, the mental condition of little Whalen was like that of a man who has strayed into a strange land and become lost. He was, in other words, bewildered. He couldn't understand just how the girl who was in his house had got there, or, waiving the problem of her presence, what was to be done with her.

The morning after her arrival he discovered that she was too ill to arise. With her permission, he came into the room he had turned over to her and found her staring up at him from the pillow, an arm stretched out across the bed. He was startled to see that she had not undressed. And then he realized that she had no clothes save those in which he had found her.

He sent out his amazed man to make some purchases for her. In the meantime, he knew that she must have medical assistance. Rather mechanically, he called up Dr. Allen.

"Say, old man, I want you to come up," he said.

"What's the matter?" Allen asked. "You don't mean that you're sick, do you?"

"No, there's someone else here," Whalen told him.

Allen arrived later with a questioning expression on his face.

Leading him to the sick-room, Whalen opened the door for him, thereafter tip-toeing through the hall to his study. He sat down, lighted a pipe and waited. His thoughts were confused and inconsecutive, after the manner of uneasy dreams.

Presently he heard a door close, and Allen's step coming through the corridor. Whalen did not turn.

Allen entered the room and looked down at him, seated in his chair and puffing nervously on his pipe.

Allen's brows were raised in satiric wrinkles.

"She won't last long," he said.

He maintained his ironic expression and continued to look at Whalen.

"Well!" he exclaimed finally. "Perhaps you have been putting something over on us, all along. You're a secretive fellow, Whalen. But it's decent of you to take her in, now that she's down on her luck!"

Whalen didn't understand, and made no reply.

Dr. Allen regarded him a few moments more.

"I'll drop in again to-morrow unless you 'phone me in the meantime," he said.

Then Whalen got up and accompanied him to the door.

He came back into the room and stood by his chair a moment, hesitant and undetermined; but at last, putting his pipe on the table, he walked through the hall to the room occupied by the girl.

He knocked very softly on the door and waited.

"All right . . . " he heard.

He went in. She was lying much as he had seen her earlier in the day, save that now she had taken off the garments in which he had found her and the upper extremity of a night-dress could be seen above the covers.

Now that Whalen had come in he was at a loss for speech and quite un-

able to fathom the impulse that had brought him to her side.

"How are you?" he asked at last, lamely.

She looked up at him out of eyes that glowed like embers, blown up to a last bright flame before the final ash.

"I don't understand you," she said, slowly.

"Eh? I asked you—"

"No, not that. I don't understand why you have me here. Don't you know that won't do you any good?"

Whalen was troubled and embarrassed.

"Good?" he repeated after her.

"What do you want with me!" she cried suddenly, her eyes blazing feverishly.

"Nothing . . . nothing," disavowed Whalen, perplexed.

"Why did you bring me here? That won't help you any. Anybody can see what kind of a person I am. . . ."

Whalen turned away from her, unable to give her an answer. The situation had all the mystery for him that it held for her. He was lost in the singular consequences of his impulse of the night before. It had seemed imperative to him then that this girl should not be deserted, standing on the bridge. And he had acted, not upon any definite avowal of intention from her, but on what he had sensed she might do.

He walked out of the room puzzled, and during the remainder of the day the hours of his perplexity dragged slowly.

Every morning of the week that followed Allen called punctually and previous to his departure never failed to regard Whalen with a brow cut with satiric wrinkles. Once, indeed, he delivered him a brief clap on the back.

"You've been a secretive fellow!" he exclaimed.

III

It was the morning after this that Whalen's man came in to him hurriedly.

"She wants to speak to you, sir," he said.

Whalen, who was not quite dressed, slipped into his coat and went to her door.

His first glimpse of her shocked him. Overnight she seemed to have been somehow divested of all substance until now it was less a body than a startling pair of febrile eyes that occupied the bed.

For a moment she did not speak as he stood over her.

"When is that doctor fellow coming?" she whispered at last.

"In an hour or two," Whalen assured her.

"You must get him sooner!" she exclaimed, with an energy that displayed itself in the intensity of her enunciation, but not in the weakened whisper of her voice.

"Why—of course. . . ." began Whalen.

"It's not for me," she said, a tinge of self-scorn colouring her words like a sardonic vocal shadow.

And, after a pause:

"For you . . ." she added.

Whalen started.

"Me?"

The eyes regarded him with an unwavering and glowing scrutiny.

"Yes . . . he thinks something that isn't true. I want to tell him. You're a respectable person. . . ."

Whalen said nothing; he still looked down at her, meeting her gaze as if it spelled him.

"I don't understand you," she said. "I knew you were a respectable person when you took my arm that night. The doctor has no right to think anything different. Get him to come here now. I'll—tell him. . . ."

Whalen, as if a light had been turned into the processes of his brain, underwent a revelation. He understood all the satiric wrinkles with which Allen had been greeting him. He recognized the tales that Allen was spreading in the club and he perceived the sly reputation that he had acquired.

He turned from the girl swiftly and went out of the room. That, then, was the significance she had for him! And

now, under the impression that he would be injured, she wished to destroy all the inferences that her presence had created!

Little Whalen at last had something he could understand—not the tragic fate of the dying girl, for such flaring realities were not in his life, but a pleasant something she had brought him. Nevertheless, he was worried. She suffered under such a singular delusion! He tortured his inventive faculty—what inventive faculty he might have possessed—to design some means of persuading Allen, when he came, that he needn't go into the sick-room. Nothing presented itself and the doctor arrived while he was yet in his quandary.

Allen started through the hall as usual.

"You'd better not go there!" exclaimed Whalen, suddenly.

The doctor turned, astonished.

"What?" he questioned. "What do you mean?"

Whalen coloured a little and dropped into his chair.

"Nothing . . ." he said.

He experienced a sense of defeat, his pose became disconsolate. In a moment she would have explained and restored his old status.

But as he was thinking this, Allen had returned and was standing in the door, frowning.

"She's gone . . ." he said. "Probably so, for the past hour."

Whalen looked up, not with comprehension in the first instant, but understanding finally. A feeling of pity came to him for a moment—and then one of great relief. It was with this relief that he sighed. He experienced a warm feeling of gratitude to the unknown girl and a surety that he would always be indebted to her in his memory. Death had not given her the opportunity to talk to Allen.

Unknowingly, she had preserved his reputation.

WHAT THERE IS

By Morris Gilbert

THERE'S the silly wind and the proud sky
And the minutes on the run,
And the ribald sea that shouts a high
Unholy benison.

There's chuckling in the cynic trees
And gossip in the grass,
And glories, gleams, and promises
That do not come to pass.

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

Although the combined exigencies of War and good taste prevent us from having the number of new spring frocks as here-to-fore, yet the most economical among us are beginning to find that after four years of striving to make things do, the time has come when they are absolutely obliged to replenish their wardrobes. To these Dame Fashion is very kind this year, for, judging by the models that have been sent to us from Paris, frocks are to be prettier than ever. Gone are the days of vulgar eccentricities, most of which were put on the market to please the taste of the German buyers, who took them not only to Berlin, but flooded the shops of London and New York with cheap imitations. The frocks of to-day seem to be mostly designed for the young and slim, as they are nearly all cut on the long straight loose lines to which we are becoming accustomed. There is very little real change in the actual styles, although there is a subtle improvement here and a modification there, till the very nucleus of beauty and elegance has been attained. The waist is seldom defined—only indicated by a loose sash or girdle. Ribbons of all widths play an important part in many of the models. They are used as sashes, hanging panels, and dainty trimmings in almost every conceivable way. As the summer advances a few cotton ribbons will be seen about. One black and white demi-toilette had a little draped white georgette sleeveless coatee disappearing in front under an apron effect of black crêpe-charmeuse. The georgette was low in front and high at the back, and outlined with narrow black silk ribbon which was tied just at the nape of the neck in a loose rosette-like knot, with long floating ends. The skirt of the frock in question was a simple affair, being very plain, with only a suspicion of drapery at the sides, and long loose handkerchief-shaped floating ends of the white georgette appearing on either side from below the jet girdle.

In Paris the mannequins are showing the models shorter than ever, in spite of all we have been told to the contrary, although I do not think this exaggeration is likely to become very popular over here; only the very "petite" person can look her best in a frock suitable to sweet sixteen, and our best English houses are not copying the French in this respect. They are showing their models slightly longer than last year, which is decidedly more becoming to the average Englishwoman who is not fond of making herself—or her ankles—conspicuous!

A delightful little note that promises to be very popular is the filmy "Yashmak" veil of tulle. It will be seen in almost every shade later on, and is simply a long scarf of the finest transparent tulle, the same colour as the hat, to which it is attached at the back. From there it is thrown carelessly across the chin, mouth and nose, and, leaving the eyes uncovered, is carried back over the opposite shoulder and wound round one arm.

There is a great feeling for grey this year—also all shades of beige—particularly for coats and skirts. Very few new tailor-made models are coming to us, chiefly because there are so few tailors left to make them; but those that *have* put in their appearance are charming in their simplicity. The habit coat is with us as usual, and is an economical investment. When cut on loose plain lines, it never gets out of date, and worn in conjunction with the new high collar and stock, nothing could be smarter, though indeed a plain tailor-made of this "genre" can take on many aspects, according to the taste of the wearer. A different collar, hat, and shoes will work wonders, and make the same garment appear either smart, artistic, or "country" with very little effort. Each individual will work

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out her own interpretations given a plain and well-cut foundation! and this is as it should be, for, to quote from a very eminent writer of fashions—"A woman should dress her soul, and not her body." Colour schemes again are very important, and a great stumbling block to many. A fairly safe guide is always to follow the tint of one's eyes, as nature never makes a mistake. A blue-eyed damsel can seldom wear the green that suits those with hazel or green orbs, and these latter are apt to add many years to their age when they choose the blue that belongs to their sisters. Not in every case, of course. One cannot make any hard and fast rule, but nine times out of ten this is so.

Tulle—or rather net—is still very much to the fore, and is used a great deal for blouses, draperies, and for entire evening dresses. Long floating-sleeves of net are the newest craze, and are extremely becoming, particularly at a dance where they twirl and float gracefully after the nymphs of the ball-room. One gossamer-like frock was worn by a fair-haired "faierie" and was carried out entirely in floating draperies of pale lavender tulle mounted on silver tissue; the only solid part was the corselet of silver embroidery, which was held in loosely at the waist by a rich blue velvet ribbon with floating ends. The neck and arms were bare and softened by the tulle draperies, which floated away from the wearer as she danced, one long end being carelessly wrapped round her arm.

AN OPEN LETTER

As I was passing along New Oxford Street the other day I was struck by the beautiful collection in the windows of Edward Good. Not only the Cameos for which he is justly famed, but all sorts of wonderful beads and other things are there. One rare necklace of yellow Carnelians was particularly attractive, and it, together with a notice: "Inspection invited," drew me into the Treasure House, and afforded me a very interesting, instructive, and pleasant half-hour. Mr. Good is perhaps more of a Collector than a Vendor, and for this reason never tires of showing his treasures and telling their histories. One cameo necklace, which was originally in the Duke of Marlborough's collection, exquisite in carving and colour, is carved in Agate and signed by the 18th century artist, Morelli, and is set in the Etruscan style. Another set, carved in Onyx, is also a marvellous work of art, consisting of classic figures, the draperies of which have a transparent effect one would not imagine possible to attain on solid material; this was signed by the famous artist, Saulini, and there were many other specimen pieces. I must not forget the "Inspiration Jewellery." It was most fascinating.

N.B.—TO OUR READERS

Owing to the necessity for economy in paper we have had to leave out our original fashion sketches this month.

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